



## Parent Informational Packet

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## Welcome to Team Vortex!

Team Vortex is a year-round competitive swim team based in Fort Collins, Colorado, offering high-quality professional coaching and technique instruction for all ages. Our mission is to engage swimmers in a competitive program by teaching proper technique and encouraging skill development in a supportive team environment. We are a non-profit organization run by a volunteer Board of Directors, who are swim parents just like you! This document is intended to serve as a reference document for all families, so please keep it in a place where you can refer to it as questions arise.

## Table of Contents

<b>Team Vortex Operations.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>USA Swimming Calendar.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Coaching approach.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Practice Groups and Locations.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Equipment and team gear.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Attendance.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>TeamUnify platform and OnDeck app.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Fees and Billing.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Volunteer Policy and Deposit.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>USA Swimming registration.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Fundraising.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Swim Meets.....</b>	<b>10</b>

## Team Vortex Operations

Vortex is a non-profit organization run by a group of volunteer Board of Directors who are all interested swim parents, value the club, and want to be a part of shaping its present and future. The Board oversees all financial and legal operations of the club including payment for the coaching staff, payment to facilities from which we rent water time for practice, and all official responsibilities and obligations as a USA Swimming affiliate club. New this year, the Board hired a part-time Team Manager to assist the Board and Coaches with team operations. The Board meets 1x/month but club operations happen on an ongoing basis. Want to learn more? Interested in potentially serving on the board at some point down the road? Seek out one of the Board members at a practice or a swim meet or send them an email! The list of current board members for the 2023-2024 year is listed on our website:

<https://www.gomotionapp.com/team/cotvsc/page/vortex-swim-club/about-us>

## USA Swimming Calendar

The short course (SC) season starts off a new swim calendar year for Team Vortex, and begins in September. The short course reflects competitions in a 25-yard pool; this is the typical length for most pools in neighborhoods or within fitness facilities. The short course season lasts from September through March. Then the USA Swimming calendar switches to a long course (LC) format, from April through July. Long course meets are competitions in a 50-meter pool. These are the longer format pools you may see at the Olympics or other national or international competitions. Team Vortex practices and competes year-round, through both short course and long course seasons.

## Coaching approach

Our coaching approach revolves around nurturing not only the swimming abilities of young athletes but also their character development. We believe in cultivating better humans alongside better swimmers. By prioritizing quality over quantity, we focus on providing a well-balanced training program that fosters excellent skill development and ensures the long-term well-being of our swimmers. Through positive guidance and personalized attention, we inspire our athletes to reach their full potential, both in and out of the water, creating a lasting impact on their lives beyond the pool. More information about your Vortex coaches can be found on our website: [Coaches](#)

## Practice Groups and Locations

Team Vortex typically practices out of three Fort Collins pools—Mulberry, EPIC, and Raintree Athletic Club. Your swimmer was assigned to a swim group; groups reflect a pipeline of ability, commitment, maturity, attitude, and age. Your swim group will have assigned practice times and locations. These locations or times are subject to change based on availability of water space, but for the most part, remain constant throughout the year. Any changes will be updated on the team calendar on TeamUnify and are usually emailed by coaches when those changes are known. For questions on expectations for each practice group and questions about moving to the next level, please see additional information on the Vortex website and talk to your coach to learn more. Please note that Vortex pays for use of the all pools and utilization for swim practice does not allow for unsupervised access to Raintree. Please pay attention to guidance provided by coaches on entry and exit procedures for Raintree. Locker rooms cannot be used by Vortex swimmers, even if your family are members of Raintree. All swimmers regardless of group will do dryland training prior to getting into the pool. Therefore, swimmers need to

wear proper closed-toe shoes—flip flops, Crocs, and winter boots are not appropriate shoes for dryland training.

As per USA Swimming regulations, parents/guardians are not allowed on the pool deck during practice. At Mulberry and EPIC there is seating above the pool area. At Raintree, this is not the case. All swimmers whose swim groups practice at Raintree will have bag tags that they are to present to the front desk upon entry. Swimmers then proceed directly to the pool, entering through the pool main entrance off of the gym next to the family locker room. Parents/guardians may escort their younger swimmers to the pool if needed, but can not sit and wait in the pool area during practice. When the practice is over, a coach will walk the group to the front of the club, where they can be reunited with their family. Please do not drop off your swimmer more than 10 minutes prior to the start of practice and promptly pick them up following the end of practice. Please be respectful of the coaches, their time, and cognizant of regulations of USA Swimming and the pools in which we practice.

## Equipment and team gear

With your registration, you receive a Vortex t-shirt and a Vortex swim cap. Other gear and equipment needed are:

1. An appropriately sized swimsuit
  - a. If unsure of what size to purchase, visit MI Sports in North Loveland (3400 N Garfield, Loveland), as employees there can assist with appropriate sizing.
  - b. A Vortex team suit for meets is strongly encouraged. These black and green suits can be purchased from MI Sports or SwimOutlet. Speedo Aquablade is more appropriate for older, more committed swimmers and Speedo endurance is best for younger swimmers.
  - c. Vortex logo can be applied to these team suits but is optional.
2. Gear as required for your swim group, see: [Vortex swim groups](#) for more information on what is needed for your group
  - a. Minimum:
    - i. Goggles
    - ii. Kickboard
    - iii. Fins (Speedo Switchblade)
  - b. Other required depending on group:
    - i. Pull buoy
    - ii. Swimmers' snorkel
    - iii. Paddles (Stroke Maker or Finis)
    - iv. Power Bags (Elite and Peak only)
3. Suits and gear can be purchased at MI Sports in North Loveland and/or our team store on SwimOutlet!
  - a. Lots of other optional gear can be purchased in either location, including swim parkas, hoodies, sweats, etc!
  - b. At MI Sports be sure to mention that you are part of Team Vortex!
4. Other time-limited Vortex gear may be offered from time to time; those opportunities will be directly emailed to the membership.

- Replacement Vortex silicone caps can be purchased from the team for \$15—email [teamgear@teamvortex.org](mailto:teamgear@teamvortex.org) to request a replacement. Your account will be directly billed.

## Attendance

Coaches keep track of attendance, as it helps them understand frequency of coach/swimmer contact and performance improvement. The minimum attendance requirements per week increase across practice groups.

Swimmers are free to take a break from the team and dues will not be required during the break as long as the family notifies Vortex by the **25th** of the preceding month to suspend next month's registration. Email: [teammanager@teamvortex.org](mailto:teammanager@teamvortex.org)

Vortex is unable to “hold” spots for swimmers. This includes the beginning of each season, in September. The only way to guarantee a spot is to register and pay the monthly dues. Swimmers wishing to join at a later date will be allowed to join based on applicable group capacity.

When taking a break or leaving the team there is no guarantee a spot will be available on return.

## TeamUnify platform and OnDeck app

Get familiar with TeamUnify as soon as you can! Team Vortex uses the TeamUnify web platform for communication, scheduling, billing, tracking of service/volunteer hours, and meet registration. This platform has a website but also an associated mobile app called OnDeck, which shares the same log-in information, but looks a bit different even though the back-end is the same.

This is where your Vortex account is hosted: where you can see your invoices, billing history, payment method, where the event calendar is located, and where you sign up for meets and team events, and many volunteer opportunities. Set up your account, download the app, and look around at what all is in there.

## Fees and Billing

### Fees

Vortex Swim Club membership consists of both one-time fees per swim year and monthly dues. Swim meets are an additional cost as are equipment and team swimsuits. Here’s the breakdown of costs and fees:

Cost	Amount	Frequency	Notes
Administrative fee	\$150 +\$30 for each additional swimmer per family	<b>1x</b> per swim year, upon registration (September-July)	
Volunteer Deposit	\$225	<b>1x</b> per swim year, upon registration	Refunded if/when family reaches 10 service hours in support of team operations or meet participation. See volunteer policy section.
USA Swimming registration	\$80/year; flex membership allowed for	<b>1x</b> calendar year	You must have a <a href="#">USA Swimming registration</a> to be part of Team Vortex

	younger swimmers at \$30/year		
Equipment	Varies based on swim group	As needed	Families are responsible for ensuring their swimmers always have functioning equipment and gear as required by their group. See equipment and gear section for more information.
Monthly dues	Varies from \$90/mo (Lightning Swim Group) to \$170/mo (Peak Swim Group)	Monthly	Additional swimmers per family are 10% off.
Swim meets	\$6.00 per swimmer per meet + a per-event fee that varies by meet	Per meet	These fees vary by meet and can add up quickly! It is your responsibility to read the meet information associated with that event in the Team Unify platform and understand the meet fees when signing up for swim meets. Swim meet fees are NOT refundable after the meet deadline regardless of the reason a swimmer does not attend the meet. NOTE: Vortex always pays for your swim meet fees and then bills your account.

**Billing**

The team bills electronically at the beginning of the month for that month. **Families are responsible for payment of dues if their swimmer is registered for the month regardless of whether the swimmer attends practice or not.** One-time administrative fee and the volunteer deposit are all billed during the first month of membership per swim year, so please plan accordingly. Billing can occur via ACH or via credit card and you need to set up a payment method within your TeamUnify account. ACH is preferred because Vortex loses revenue when credit cards are charged, but families should pay attention to varying amount of monthly bills because of meet fees.

It is your responsibility to review the account billing summary that you receive and to keep your current email address updated with the team. Your account statement is emailed to the primary email entered into the team website/TeamUnify account.

The new TeamUnify platform that launched in Summer 2023 automatically emails when a new charge occurs on your account. We will no longer send out invoices at the end of the month to review. If you have questions about your charges, log into your account, there is a description of each charge. As always, you can reach out if you still have questions.

**How do I check my statement/invoice each month?**

- Click on the \$ Invoice/Payment link on the left side of our website or “View Billing Summary” in “My Account” in the OnDeck app

- Between the 27<sup>th</sup> - last day of current month: use the projected amount owed for your payment amount.
- Between the 1<sup>st</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup>: use the current invoice amount for your payment amount.
- You have until the last day of the current month to dispute the charges/payments in the account billing summary. Contact [teammanager@teamvortex.org](mailto:teammanager@teamvortex.org) to dispute charges.

### How to Make a Payment

Payment Options: You must log into your TeamUnify account and select your payment method.

Payment by automatic bank account withdrawal (ACH): Vortex offers automatic payment through electronic payment. Members fill out their account information on our secure team website. This is the preferred method of payment. All ACH electronic fund transfers will occur on the 1st of each month for the entire account balance. This transaction can take up to 72 business hours. If the 1st of the month falls on a weekend or a holiday, the processing begins on the next business day.

### Past Dues Policy

If the account balance is not paid in full by 6:00pm the 5th of the month, a late fee of \$15 will be charged. Any ACH transaction that is pending at this time will not incur the late fee. Automatic payments that fail to process may be charged a \$25.00 fee.

If dues are **30 days delinquent**, the family's swimmer(s) will no longer be permitted to participate in any aspect of the program.

### Prorated Monthly Dues

Team Vortex Swim Club DOES NOT prorate partial month swimming except for these two circumstances:

1. the first month a new swimmer joins the team
2. high school swimmers leaving to swim with their high school swim team

**New for the 2023-2024 swim year:** swimmers leaving in May to swim for their summer recreational club will be charged for ALL of May—swimming a partial month in May is no longer prorated. Swimmers can leave at the end of April and not be charged for May, or swim through the first two weeks of May and be charged for all of May.

### Taking a Break or Leaving the Team

Families MUST SUBMIT EMAIL NOTIFICATION BY THE **25TH** of the month if you do not plan to swim the following month. You are responsible for paying dues until we receive on-time notification that you are taking a break or leaving the team. Email your request to [teammanager@teamvortex.org](mailto:teammanager@teamvortex.org)

**Your account balance is due in full when you leave the team.**

Vortex does not “hold” spots for swimmers who leave the team. If you leave and are no longer paying monthly dues, that spot is able to be filled by another swimmer, and there is no guarantee there will be a spot if you decide to return at a later date.

## Scholarship Program

We offer a scholarship discount on monthly dues for up to 2 swimmers per practice group. Applicants must qualify for a reduced rate through the City of Fort Collins and must commit to the scholarship agreement. Please email [teammanager@teamvortex.org](mailto:teammanager@teamvortex.org) for more information and the scholarship application.

## Volunteer Policy and Deposit

Unlike many sports or other extracurriculars in which your kids may participate, swimming relies on volunteers to support all competition. Team Vortex requests **10 hours** of commitment **per family (not per swimmer)** per swim year. This commitment is needed to 1) ensure we can meet our requirements to support running of swim meets in northern Colorado through various roles, including but limited to providing timers, and 2) share the responsibility of providing a supportive team environment with robust administrative support for our swim club. We charge a volunteer deposit of \$225 for 10 hours of volunteer support; the deposit will appear on your first monthly bill per swim year.

### How can I earn volunteer hours?

There are ample opportunities during the course of the year to earn hours and ultimately have your volunteer deposit refunded to your account. These are the most common ways to earn volunteer hours:

1. Volunteering to support meets. We are often required to provide a certain number of timers for swim meets in which we participate. Timing is very easy, and you shouldn't be intimidated if you've never done it before. However, we are generally expected to provide fewer timers than we were before COVID. Please do not assume you can achieve 10 hours of volunteer service solely through volunteering at meets.
2. Volunteering to support a regular team administrative functions. The Board Members are all Vortex parents, and Board Members invest time, well beyond 10 hours a year, to support and improve the club. Aside from Board Members, there are many other regular/recurring roles that over the course of the swim year contribute 10 hours of service. These include:
  - o USA Swimming registration liaison
  - o Safe Sport liaison
  - o Graphic design support for logos and gear
  - o Social events coordinator for younger groups/high school groups
  - o Swim-a-thon coordination
  - o Team dinner coordination and set-up/clean-up
  - o Newsletter
  - o Photographers for younger swim groups and older swim groups, respectively.
3. Becoming a USA Swimming Official—Team Vortex currently has no officials! We really need to identify parents who anticipate being around swimming for a while and are willing to go through the training to become an official and then perform the minimum number of officiating sessions to retain certification.
4. Identifying corporate sponsors (see Sponsorship section)
5. Identifying skills or connections you may bring to the club that could improve the team.



Please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at [volunteercoordinator@teamvortex.org](mailto:volunteercoordinator@teamvortex.org) with any questions or concerns

### How do I learn about volunteer opportunities?

Volunteer opportunities will be advertised to the registered membership via email. We hope to fill some regular/administrative roles early in September. Other opportunities are emailed when they arise. Timing needs for meets are usually released a day or two before the meet starts. The volunteer coordinator will open a “job sign up” in that event on the TeamUnify calendar, and you need to log-in or open your OnDeck app, go into that event on the calendar, and put your name in the slot of your choice!

### How are volunteer hours tracked?

Anything with a job sign-up in TeamUnify will be tracked automatically in the back-end of TeamUnify. If certain volunteer roles end up being more hours than what the Volunteer Coordinator estimated, please reach out to discuss the additional time served. For other volunteer roles, the tracking is more informal. Please reach out to the Volunteer Coordinator with questions. If you aren't sure of your balance, the Volunteer Coordinator can look it up for you.

### What happens when I think I earned our 10 hours?

The Volunteer Coordinator tracks membership volunteer hours and when families hit the 10-hour minimum, notifies billing, and the credit will be placed on that family's account. If you think you've reached the hours and don't see it on your account the following month, please reach out to [volunteercoordinator@teamvortex.org](mailto:volunteercoordinator@teamvortex.org) to verify. It is your responsibility to ensure you notice the credit appear on your account.

### Does reaching 10 hours mean I'm off the hook to volunteer more?

Volunteering when there is a need is an expectation of all Vortex families. The volunteer deposit is a means to increase family participation/engagement in the operations of the club and swim meets. Because you reach 10 hours doesn't mean that needs won't arise that you will be asked to step up and fill. In years past, timing assignments for meets were assigned, and families had to go time at meets, even meets in which their kids weren't swimming. We don't want to have to resort to assigning meet support, so please ensure that job sign-ups are filled no matter what.

Our volunteer deposit and associated hourly requirement is substantially less than other area swim teams. We are able to keep our dues low by comparison because we rely on volunteers to support team operations rather than full-time paid staff. With your shared support and willingness to help, we can keep it that way!

### Is the volunteer deposit prorated if we only swim for half of the year?

Vortex is a year-round swim club. The volunteer deposit is not prorated.

## USA Swimming registration

As a USA Swimming affiliate club, a USA Swimming registration number is **required** for all swimmers irrespective of age or swim group. This is not only required to participate in meets, but is required for practice, as this also provides insurance coverage for the swimmers. USA Swimming registration is valid for 1 year, and occurs on a calendar year basis. Families must register their own children, and this must occur for them to be allowed in the pool to practice. They will be turned away if a valid registration isn't

in hand. So, shortly after registration for Team Vortex, ensure you register with USA Swimming ASAP. For returning swimmers, renewal needs to occur before the start of practice in the new calendar year in January, For more info and links to the registration, see: [USA Swimming registration](#)

## Fundraising

Team Vortex is a non-profit organization. Outgoing expenses are primarily payroll for all coaches and renting lanes for practice at all three pools, which are billed at an hourly rate. Additional outgoing expenses include equipment, t-shirts, software, and coach costs for reimbursement for expenses related to all meets. Team Vortex income is 1) administrative fees, 2) monthly dues, and 3) fundraising.

### Swim-a-thon

Our largest fundraising effort each year is Swim-a-thon. This is a direct donation program organized by USA Swimming. We encourage swimmers to obtain general donations or donations for each lap swam during our culminating Swim-a-thon event, typically with donations over a month or so in the fall and the culminating event on a Saturday morning. It's a day filled with family, fun, food, and prizes!

### Sponsorship Program

Team Vortex started a corporate sponsorship program last year. Vortex will use the funds not only to offset club expenses but 50% of funding from sponsors directly supports the scholarship program, which provides needs-based scholarships. Team Vortex strives to ensure swimming is as inclusive as possible, allowing for the benefits to swimming to reach all members of the community. If you identify a new corporate sponsor, volunteer hours will be reimbursed. For more information, please email: [sponsorship@teamvortex.org](mailto:sponsorship@teamvortex.org).

### Grocery store cards

Vortex participates in community rewards programs for both King Soopers and Safeway. For more information see the [Vortex Fundraising Page](#).

## Swim Meets

As a competitive swim team, participation in meets is strongly encouraged for all levels of swimmers. Understanding how to sign up for meets and what to consider and how to plan for the day of a meet can relieve a lot of uncertainty for new swim families.

Team Vortex participates in approximately one meet per month, sometimes more, usually starting in mid-October. These meets are primarily in northern Colorado, including north Denver. The Vortex calendar is up to date regarding meets that we as a team will participate in at least several months in advance. The Head Coach selects the meets among those available based on a wide variety of thoughtful criteria about timing and appropriateness for various age groups and level of competition.

### Swim meet sign-up

#### **Do**

- Pay attention to email and TeamUnify to learn when sign-up for a particular meet is open
- Understand the TeamUnify sign-up process
- Understand what reasonable and unreasonable events for your child may be

- Read the meet announcement from the hosting team about what events will be swam what day, how many events each swimmer is limited to per day and overall, and meet and event-specific costs
- Come prepared at the time the coaches ask swimmers to be there! Bring snacks, water, and a towel.
- Have fun, learn, and grow from the experience and cheer on your Vortex teammates!

### **Don't**

- Pay the meet directly–Vortex handles this and bills you!
- Disagree with coaches if they don't think your swimmers is yet ready to compete in a certain event–they know best!
- Ask for a refund if your kid is sick or you decide you have other plans that weekend
- Leave a meet without having swimmers talk to coaches

### **Additional info:**

Coaches will send out information via email when a meet is open for sign-up and will indicate the date of the Vortex registration closing. This will be earlier than the overall deadline for registration for the meet, because our coaches register the entire team together and pay for the entirety of the Vortex team costs upon registration. Within that calendar event on your TeamUnify account, you will find the meet announcement put out by the hosting team. This document contains a multitude of information, including what days and which events will occur on each day. This document will also clearly state the cost per event for the swim meet, so please take note. The maximum number of events per swimmer per day and overall will also be stated therein.

Most swim meets have events on three straight days. The events on Friday are typically the distance events and depending on the format of the meet, all ages may swim in the morning sessions the other two days or they may be segmented into different sessions, with the 10 and under age groups swimming at different times than 12 and over swimmers.

During our open registration period for each meet, each family must indicate within their TeamUnify account which events their child would like to swim in that given meet. Events are organized by gender and age group (8 and under, 9-10 years, 11-12 years, 13-14 years, and 15 years and above). If you are a new swimmer, please discuss with your coach what you should register your child for before doing so. Within TeamUnify, the events they are eligible to swim will be the only ones selectable. This means eligibility by age and gender. However, there are specific swimming regulations for each stroke, and some strokes (breaststroke and butterfly) have more specific regulations. If your child does not routinely swim those strokes in a manner that is legal during practice, the coaches will not approve their participation in that event during a formal competition, as they will invariably be disqualified by USA Swimming officials. Although disqualification happens, even to experienced swimmers from time to time, setting a child up without hope for swimming a legal stroke in a competition isn't fair to anyone.

Swimmers 8 years and under can swim 25-yard events (1 length of the pool for short course season); however all swimmers 9 years and over have a minimum distance of 50 yards for any event. Coaches manually approve all of the event requests prior to submitting the Vortex registration for the meet, and they will suggest alternative events if needed.

## Swim meet costs and billing

You do not need to do anything differently or separately to pay for swim meet entries—just sign up in TeamUnify. Meet fees will be calculated per swimmer and billed along with monthly dues. Depending on timing, it's possible that meet fees will be billed BEFORE the meet. Please plan accordingly. **After registration for the meet has closed, payment will not be refunded under any circumstances, no matter the reason for lack of attendance.** These costs are not ours to refund—they are the hosting team and USA Swimming costs. Please pay attention to meet fees as they can add up quickly.

## Types of swim meets

### Intrasquad

Team Vortex is divided into two teams, swimmers will compete against similar age swimmers. This gives swimmers the chance to compete and parents a chance to practice running an effective meet.

### Dual Meet

Team Vortex competes with only one other team. These meets help promote team unity and allow us to build relationships with other area teams.

### Pentathlon

When swimmers compete in one event of each stroke plus an Individual Medley (I.M.). Awards are usually based on the lowest combined time-total of all 5 events in the swimmer's gender and age bracket.

### Silver Circuit

These are beginner swim meets! These meets have a maximum time standard to enter the event. Your fastest time must be slower than the time standard. These meets usually offer a low key environment to facilitate new swimmers transition into USA Swimming sanctioned events without long timelines and in a good starting format.

### District Championships

The Northern Colorado Conference/League championship meet to crown a league championship club. All Team Vortex swimmers should attend Northern Colorado District meets, held twice a year.

### Silver State and State Championships

At the end of Short Course (winter) and Long Course (summer) season, Silver State and State Championship meets are sanctioned by Colorado Swimming Inc., the governing body of swimming in the state of Colorado. Colorado Swimming Inc. sets the qualifying time standards for these state meets.

### Zones, Sectionals, Futures, Junior Nationals, Senior Nationals and Olympic Trials

These are championship meets that require qualifying standards to be met. They are a series of national level stepping-stone meets to progress competitively at the highest levels depending upon age and region. These are the culminating meets for swimmer development and should be a part of all swimmers' long term goals and aspirations. To learn more, talk to your coach!