Illinois Swimming Athlete Representative Survival Guide

A Letter to the Athlete Representatives

Congratulations on being selected to serve as an Athlete Representative for the Illinois Swimming LSC. This is an amazing opportunity! You have been entrusted with an important and influential job of representing this great sport, your club, and the athletes of Illinois Swimming. It is your task to make our sport better for the many people that are involved in it. The decisions you make as an athlete representative may have a long term effect on the direction and success of the sport. This guide exists in order to better facilitate your understanding of what it takes to be a successful athlete representative as well as what is expected of you.

As an Athlete Representative, you have many duties. **You** are representing Illinois Swimming as an **athlete**, therefore, you have a say in what is to occur in committee meetings. The adults are here to observe the wishes of the athletes, so it is crucial that the athletes use their voice. As an athlete rep, you will be stating ideas, sharing your opinion on different topics, and listening to important details that pertain to the subject. Some important things to remember:

- Always communicate. You have been elected to represent your fellow athletes, make sure to speak up
- Work together as a team, as you are all working towards the same goal of making Illinois Swimming the best it can be
- Use each others' strengths to compliment your weaknesses
- Remember that Athlete Representatives have the duty of representing the views and desires of all the swimmers in Illinois

Being an Athlete Representative for Illinois Swimming is truly a rewarding experience, so make the most of it! Remember, your voice counts! You have all of the same rights and privileges as non-athlete representatives but your job is to represent your peers, volunteer when you can and enjoy the experience. A couple other bonuses, this looks great on a college or employment application and many former athlete representatives have gained valuable experience that impacted and guided their future careers.

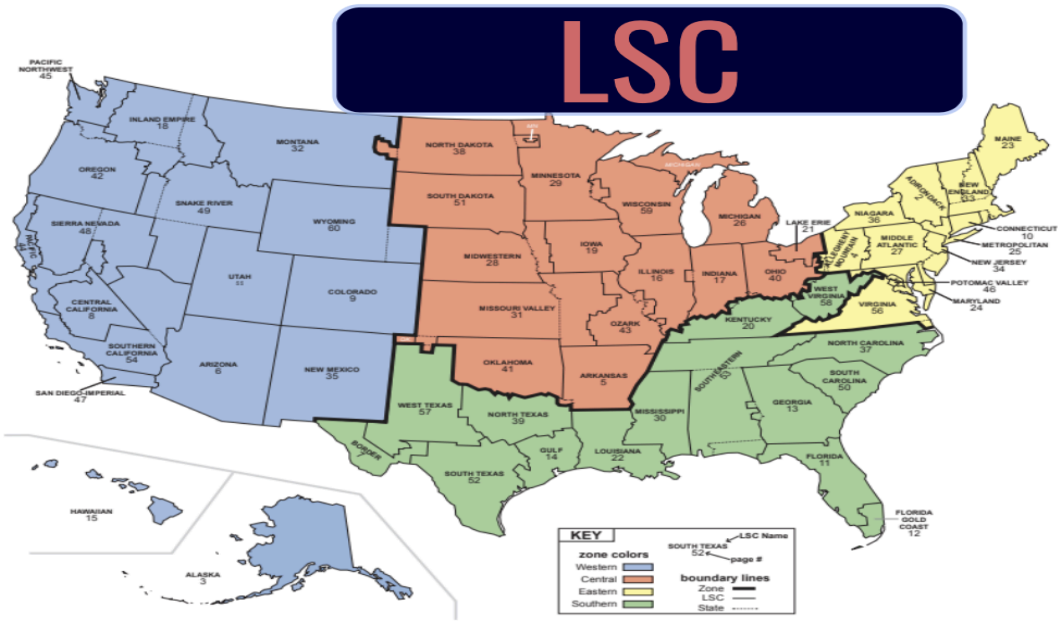
Illinois Swimming Athlete Representative Survival Guide

Table of Contents:

A Letter to the Athlete Representatives	Page 1
Table of Contents	Page 2
Structure of USA Swimming	Page 3
Structure of the Central Zone	Page 4
Structure of Illinois Swimming	Page 5
How Do Athlete Representatives Fit Into All of This?	Page 6
Types of Athlete Representatives	Pages 6-8
List of Illinois Swimming Committees	Pages 8-9
Common Platforms for Athlete Meetings	Page 10-11
Athlete Representative Best Practice	Pages 11-12
Athlete Events and Opportunities	Page 13

Illinois Swimming Athlete Representative Survival Guide

Structure of USA Swimming: USA Swimming is made up of 4 Zones and 59 Local Swim Committees (LSCs). The four Zones are the Central Zone (CZ) in orange on the map below, Eastern Zone in yellow, Southern Zone in green and the Western Zone in blue. Each Zone has Local Swim Committees (LSCs) housed within the Zone. The LSC is a separate and independent corporation to whom USA Swimming has delegated certain governing and supervisory responsibilities within the geographic boundaries designated by USA Swimming. Each LSC shall have jurisdiction over the sport of swimming as delegated to it in the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations to conduct swimming programs consistent with the policies and procedures of USA Swimming and to sanction, approve, observe, oversee and conduct on behalf of USA Swimming competitive swimming events within the LSC boundaries. Each LSC is tasked to provide programming, service and support to its member athletes, teams, coaches and volunteers. Our LSC is known as Illinois Swimming.



Illinois Swimming Athlete Representative Survival Guide

Structure of the Central Zone: Illinois Swimming is located in the Central Zone (CZ). We are one of fifteen LSC's in the CZ. Other LSC's in the Central Zone include: North Dakota, South Dakota, Midwestern, Missouri Valley, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Iowa, Ozark, Arkansas, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio and Lake Erie. The Central Zone Athlete Division is led by the Central Zone Athlete Representatives, they are members of the USA Swimming Athletes Executive Committee and serve as co-chairs of the Central Zone Athlete Committee. The responsibilities and focuses of the Central Zone Athlete Committee are as follows:

- To promote and encourage inter-LSC communication between athlete representatives of the Central Zone at the annual USAS Convention and throughout the year.
- To train, encourage, and mentor incoming LSC athlete representatives, and provide them with tools to ensure success.
- To ensure athlete representation at the annual Central Zone Meeting and on all Central Zone Committees and Task Forces.
- To ensure that non-athletes understand the unique perspective that athlete members bring to the table.
- Interested in learning more or getting involved at the Central Zone level? Contact the Central Zone Athlete Representative or an athlete representative from your LSC!

Fun Fact: This survival guide is a perfect example of athletes coming together in the Central Zone to share ideas and resources to continue forward momentum in athlete involvement and engagement.

Illinois Swimming Athlete Representative Survival Guide

Structure of Our Local LSC, Illinois Swimming: Illinois Swimming is our local LSC. Every LSC has a Board of Directors (BOD). The BOD is the driving force behind everything from swim meets, to finances, and everything in between. The Illinois Swimming BOD has monthly meetings. These meetings are virtual, except for the annual House of Delegates meeting each fall. These meetings are most often held at 7:30 PM on the second Wednesday of the month, but that is subject to change. **As an athlete rep, you are a voting member of the BOD**, so you are expected to attend these meetings.

In addition to the BOD meetings, Illinois Swimming has two special meetings per year. The first is Town Hall, which is held in the spring. This meeting is virtual, just like board meetings, but all members of the LSC are invited to this call, such as coaches, parents, and athletes. This meeting serves as a chance to update the Illinois Swimming community on things that are happening in the LSC. As athlete representatives, you will have a chance to address the LSC and explain what you have been working on.

The other meeting is called the House of Delegates. This meeting is held every fall, and it is in person. At this meeting, the main focus is passing legislation, approving the budget for the next year and providing an opportunity for committees to share updates on initiatives and events. At this meeting, each club can send one non-athlete representative (typically a coach or club administrator) and one athlete representative to vote for their club. The members of the BOD also get votes, which includes the Junior and Senior Athlete Representatives. When voting, club delegates should consider the best interests of their club and Illinois Swimming. BOD members must consider the best interests of the LSC as a whole.

In addition to the BOD and their committees, Illinois Swimming employs staff members to help with the operations of the LSC. The Illinois Swimming Program Director is the liaison to the Athlete Reps and their committee. The Program Director essentially helps the Athlete Representatives implement their initiatives within the framework, rules and policies of Illinois Swimming.

Illinois Swimming Athlete Representative Survival Guide

How do Athlete Representatives Fit Into All of This?

Why are Athlete Representatives on the BOD? Why do athletes serve on LSC committees? Why can athletes vote at HOD?

- The Ted Stevens Amateur Sports Act, originally passed by the US congress in 1978 and updated in 1998, established the US Olympic Committee and established national governing bodies for swimming.
- 20% of the Board of Directors, House of Delegates, and committees are required to be Athlete Representatives
    - USA Swimming and Illinois Swimming requires 33%
- This act required that athletes contribute to the governance of their sport. Athletes serve on committees, boards, and have votes at HOD meetings because the Ted Stevens Amateur Sports Act requires it.

Types of Athlete Representatives:

- **Illinois Swimming Club Athlete Representative**
    - Club Athlete Representative and club voting delegate at HOD
- **Illinois Swimming LSC Athlete Representatives**
    - Board of Directors Senior Athlete Representatives
    - Board of Directors Junior Athlete Representative
- **Illinois Swimming Committee Athlete Representatives**
    - Age Group Committee
    - Coaches Committee
    - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee
    - Governance Committee
    - Officials Committee
    - Open Water Committee
    - Operational Risk Committee
    - Performance Committee
    - Rules and Regulations Committee
    - Safe Sport Committee
    - Senior Committee
    - **The Athlete Committee is comprised of athlete members on the above committees, led by LSC Senior Athlete Reps**

Illinois Swimming Athlete Representative Survival Guide

Club Athlete Representative: The Club Athlete Representative serves as the voice of their club and represents their club at the Illinois Swimming House of Delegates Meeting in October, as the athlete voting delegate. They serve as a leader, communicate with their coaches, and work with their teammates to better their team and Illinois Swimming as a whole. They can also apply to serve on committees to further contribute to Illinois Swimming.

LSC Athlete Representative: An LSC Athlete Representative is an elected athlete who represents all LSC athletes, and serves on the LSC Board of Directors. In Illinois Swimming there are (2) Junior and (2) Senior representatives, (2) At-large representatives. The LSC Reps have additional responsibilities which include representing Illinois Swimming at zone meetings, House of Delegates and USA Swimming Meetings, either in person or virtual. LSC Reps oversee any athlete driven programming and are required to prepare and lead athlete committee meetings as well as provide updates at the BOD Meeting. They can serve on a committee of choice, and must promote and ensure there is athlete representation and engagement across all committees and Illinois Swimming.

NOTE: You must be at least a sophomore or at least 16 years to apply for this position. In addition you must be an athlete member in good standing, currently competing (or competed the last 3 years) and have permanent residence in IL.

Each year elections are held for Junior Representatives, who are voted by their peers online. New Junior Reps are announced at HOD, and then the current Junior Reps become Senior Reps.

- **Board of Directors Senior Athlete Representatives:** It is your job to guide and train the Junior Athlete Representatives so that they have all the tools necessary to be Senior Athlete Representatives next year. As Senior Athlete Reps, it is your responsibility to ensure the ideas of the Athlete Committee are heard and implemented.
- **Board of Directors Junior Athlete Representatives** Enjoy this time learning and watching from the Senior Athlete Representatives. Ensure that you stay involved and are very observant, as doing so will make you a better Senior Athlete Representative. Also, feel free to get involved in a project, and make the most of your term.

Illinois Swimming Athlete Representative Survival Guide

Committee Athlete Representative:

Illinois Swimming has many committees and athlete representation is essential to the forward movement of our LSC.

When considering involvement on a committee, a potential representative should be cognizant of the responsibility of being a Committee Athlete Rep. We need athletes who take initiative, are organized, committed and able to meet and interact with others, whether their peers or adults in the swim community.

How to apply to be on a committee:

- Refer to the list of committees, below, to see what you are interested in.
- Please make sure prior to applying that you are able to commit to being an active member of the committee and add value to the committee.
- If you are interested, fill out the Athlete Rep/Committee Form that will be published in early fall. You can select multiple committees of interest.
    - There are a certain number of athlete reps on each committee. The Senior Athlete Reps will work to place athletes as needed, based on interest and strengths.
- Await your email confirmation of placement.

List of Illinois Swimming Committees

Age Group: The Age Group Committee conducts programming for athletes 14 & Under, including camps like Age Group Select Camp, Aim for the Stars, etc. They also oversee and recommend changes to Age Group Championships and age group initiatives.

Athletes: The Athlete Committee is where all LSC athlete representatives & committee members come together to discuss any new information in different clubs, zones, and committees. They also plan ways to engage athletes through social media, leadership summits, etc.. All athlete representatives are automatically placed on this committee.

Coaches: The Coaches committee is a voice for coaches of both large and small clubs. They work to make sure coaches are supported within Illinois Swimming, and propose educational and professional development initiatives.

Illinois Swimming Athlete Representative Survival Guide

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: The DEI Committee supports all swimmers who are represented within swimming and discusses and confronts DEI issues within the LSC. They ensure that all athletes are included and treated fairly within our LSC.

Governance: The Governance Committee is responsible for ensuring the LSC operates within the rules of USA Swimming and their own Illinois Swimming Rules and Regulations; Policies and Procedures.

Officials: The Officials Committee conducts programming to recruit, educate, train and certify a diverse team of USA Swimming officials. LSC officials provide quality and consistent officiating for athletes in the LSC and a safe swimming environment.

Open Water: This committee deals with anything regarding open water. It is responsible for setting up Open Water meets, encouraging participation within the state, and more.

Operational Risk: This Operational Risk committee deals with injuries, safety issues, and other reports filed in Illinois Swimming, and ensures clubs evaluate their procedures when issues arise.

Performance: This committee evaluates the performance of the LSC and drives initiatives that assist athletes at the highest levels of the sport (ex: Winter Junior Nationals, Summer Junior Nationals, Olympic Trials). Therefore, it is imperative that athletes selected for this committee be swimming at those high levels.

Rules and Regulations: The committee reviews and updates LSC Rules and presents them at the Board of Directors and House of Delegates meetings.

Safe Sport: The Safe Sport committee ensures that Illinois Swimming is following Safe Sport regulations set by USA Swimming and makes sure all required educational programs and rules are publicized.

Senior: The Senior Committee conducts programming for athletes 15 and over, including camps like the Senior Quad Challenge. They also oversee and recommend changes to the Senior Championships.

Illinois Swimming Athlete Representative Survival Guide

Common Platforms for Illinois Swimming Meetings

- Zoom
- Email
- Text

Most of your meetings will be held in a virtual format (either on zoom or phone call). This virtual setting can create unique challenges that you may not come across in person. Unfortunately, some committees meet during school so athletes are not able to join those meetings. However, you are expected to watch recordings of those committees, read the minutes, and participate when you can. Here are some tips to make the most of your virtual environment:

-General Tips-

Limit Distractions: Make sure to place your computer on "Do Not Disturb," and put away your phone and other unnecessary distractions. You may turn off your Zoom camera, but be aware that this will make it easier to be less engaged.

Be Prepared: Prior to the meeting, be sure to read the minutes of the previous meeting and read over notes from any subcommittee and/or zone meetings you may have attended since the last meeting.

Communication: Clear messaging is the key to working effectively. Tone can be interpreted differently on a virtual platform-when in doubt, go for a positive tone. Neutral tone is often interpreted as negative and positive tone is interpreted as neutral.

Don't Be Afraid to Reach Out: Feel free to maximize different virtual platforms to ask questions/for help from the more experienced athlete reps.

Be Inclusive and Supportive: The virtual setting can often discourage athletes from speaking up (especially newer athlete reps). Make sure to do your part in ensuring that everyone feels included and comfortable. Bring athletes into the conversation (ie: "Hey so & so, what do you think about this idea?), and if you are new, don't be discouraged if you don't feel comfortable speaking in the first meeting! We are all here to help each other and celebrate everyone's ideas and successes.

Illinois Swimming Athlete Representative Survival Guide

Be Respectful: Be respectful of all ideas and opinions, and demonstrate that verbally and with body language/facial expressions. Also, please do not take screenshots or screen recordings of meetings or individuals within meetings without their explicit consent

Be Proactive: Take initiative on these committees! Please don't be afraid to do something that you see needs to be done.

Maintain Communication: Especially in a virtual setting it can be hard to stay in contact with other committee members. Always make sure to "Reply All" in committee thread emails so that everyone stays in the loop.

MAAPP Rules: Per Safe Sport Rules, if you are in communication with an adult, only email them between the hours of 8am - 8pm. Please remember to always copy a parent, guardian, or another adult on emails in these communications.

Athlete Representative Best Practices

It takes special athletes to make great representatives. This section will discuss what is expected of an athlete representative and what traits are helpful to possess. Of course, every athlete representative has their personal strengths and weaknesses, but the more of these traits one has, the better a representative tends to be.

Qualities of an Athlete Representative:

- A great love for the sport of swimming and desire to make a positive contribution to swimming
- A willingness to sacrifice their time and energy towards the betterment of the sport
- The confidence and ability to speak in front of others and communicate well with the written word.
- The ability to problem solve and see multiple views of topics
- The ability to process information and listen well
- The ability to compromise and give and take
- The ability to work with other athletes/officials/coaches/volunteers and others involved in the sport

Illinois Swimming Athlete Representative Survival Guide

- The ability to travel to attend certain meetings and events in person.
- While good/bad grades do not necessarily make or break an athlete rep, academically stronger athletes tend to be more responsible, better able to understand the complex workings of sport governance and better with reporting and formulating ideas and points in their representative duties.

An athlete representative is expected:

- To represent themselves, other athletes and the sport of swimming in a manner that is becoming of a responsible, mature, civilized person
- To attend all meetings to the best of their ability
- To complete tasks assigned to them to the best of their ability, and to seek out help in those tasks if needed
- To communicate with other representatives and participate in all meetings, calls, votes, discussions, etc.
- To dress and act appropriately as a representative of all the athletes in the sport of swimming and the LSC
- To inform athletes higher up of any conflicts/problems/issues you encounter as a participant in the sport of swimming or in the implementation or completion in any of your duties

How to ensure your athlete voice is heard during your time as an Athlete Representative:

- Communicate (answer emails, respond to text messages, contribute to group discussions, etc.)
- Ensure that what you say is succinct, respectful, and well thought-out
- Listen (do not repeat questions that have already been asked, and do not repeat ideas that have already been stated. Ensure that what you say is contributing to the conversation and moving it forward)
- Feel Free to ask questions during a meeting or outside of a meeting if you want more information
- Dress professionally for meetings
- Attend all possible meetings, come prepared and participate
- Be punctual

Illinois Swimming Athlete Representative Survival Guide

Athlete Events and Opportunities

Board Meetings: LSC Board Meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month. Illinois Swimming Athlete Representatives are expected to attend and participate in these meetings.

USA Swimming and Central Zone Workshops: The Workshops are an opportunity for Athlete Representatives from all LSCs to gather and share ideas on how to make each others' LSCs better. Additionally, it allows the Athlete Representatives to meet with their cluster or Zone leaders. This is an invaluable opportunity, as the cluster leaders have a lot of experience and wonderful ideas.

Working With Non-Athletes: Just like you, the adults in Illinois Swimming are volunteers. They are working towards the same goal of bettering Illinois Swimming. Never be afraid to use your athlete voice. You were elected into this position to represent all of the swimmers in Illinois Swimming, and you have as much influence as the adults. While using your athlete voice, always remember to be respectful of the talents and knowledge that the non-athletes are bringing to Illinois Swimming.

Leading the future...

Athlete Led Initiatives

As an Athlete Representative for your club, a committee or as an LSC Athlete Rep, you have a strong voice that has fueled much of the change and programming already implemented or in progress of being put forth to our membership. **Examples of this include:**

The athlete led camp, **Aim for the Stars** for our 10&U Regional swimmers. This was the brainchild of our Athlete Reps and has continued to grow in size and purpose with over 20 Senior Athletes taking the lead at 2 sites, reaching nearly 100 of our up and coming athletes.

The Championship Meet Task Force was created after an athlete-led discussion over the need to improve the championship meet experience for 10&U athletes. This task force reviewed the trends of our LSC and proposed changes to improve retention and performance. Their recommendations were accepted by the Technical Committees (Age Group and Senior), presented to the membership as well as the legislation needed to enact these changes, which will be voted on at the House of Delegates Meeting this fall.