

## **REPORT FROM APRIL WORKSHOP**

### **Amanda Gleason – Official's Track**

We had some really great sessions and were given a lot of very useful information. There were so many officials present that most of our sessions were standing room only. I was very impressed that all the "corners" of the country were represented, including Alaska, Hawaii, and Maine, each of which have unique challenges as geographically-remote and smaller LSCs. I had some great conversations with the Alaska officials chair about how she deals with remote locations, particularly in winter, and attracting and retaining officials.

The workshop's main takeaways, as summarized by the national officials' chair (NOC), were:

1. Start with heart
2. Provide a fair venue
3. Use the rule book and meet announcement to be athlete-centric.

As mentioned above, a lot of emphasis was put on providing a fair venue for all the athletes and on using the rule book and our meet announcements to provide consistency and uniformity, both within each LSC and across the country. Many of the larger LSCs pointed out that there can be major differences within their own various regions and the NOC emphasized that it's important that rules are being applied fairly and consistently across the country. To aid in that, the NOC and the officials' committee are working on creating uniform certification standards for officials that will apply nationwide with the hope that there won't be 59 different ways of officiating among the 59 LSCs.

The importance of mentoring new and advancing officials was another topic that received a lot of attention and that goes in line with the importance of uniformity in officiating. Prospective and new officials should be mentored into the role and that mentor should be checking in with the new official to help allay any concerns or issues that may arise. In addition, the mentor can help gauge when the official may be ready to advance to a different position, such as an experienced stroke and turn official advancing to the role of chief judge or starter. The introduction of uniform certification standards will help with this process, as well. When possible, officials should be encouraged to attend and work at meets in other LSCs and, when possible, larger meets with more experienced officials, such as zones or regionals, in order to both gain more experience and work with different teams of officials across LSCs.

Much discussion was made about the availability of clinics and training and how even though in-person clinics are often preferable, online offerings, such as the ones Potomac Valley Swimming made available to us during COVID, can be crucial, especially to smaller or more geographically-remote LSCs, to obtaining and retaining officials. In addition, there was quite a bit of time devoted to the importance of having calm and rational discussions with coaches, athletes, or parents when things become heated and of remaining impartial in such situations, even if that means telling a coach that you need some time to look into a situation in order to give it some time to diffuse.

Since I went back and forth between the "New Referees" and "Officials Chair" tracks, I likely missed some stuff from each track. I have provided the power point presentations to the office.