



Lakota YMCA Stingrays  
Swim Team Parent Handbook  
2025-2026



Lakota YMCA Stingrays Swim Team

6703 Yankee Road, Liberty Township, Ohio 45044

513-779-3917

<https://lakotaymca.com/lakota-ymca-stingrays-competitive-swim-team>



## WELCOME & PURPOSE

Welcome to the Lakota YMCA Stingrays!

This handbook provides important information about team policies, communication, registration, fees, meets, volunteering, and expectations.

All swimmers and families are expected to read this guide and follow team procedures.

## TEAM MISSION

Our mission is to provide a **competitive swimming program for athletes ages 6–19** that focuses on:

- Skill development
- Individual achievement
- Physical fitness
- Christian principles
- Teamwork
- Sportsmanship
- Family participation

As part of the **YMCA Swim Program**, we value learning, goal setting, discipline, and personal growth alongside competition.

## MEMBERSHIP & ELIGIBILITY

- The Stingrays Swim Team is **year-round** and open to swimmers ages 6–19.
- All swimmers must have a **Lakota Family YMCA Family Membership** to participate.
- New swimmers must complete a **coach evaluation** to be placed in the correct practice group.
- Coaches may refer swimmers to YMCA swim lessons or Little Rays before joining the team if needed.

## USA SWIMMING MEMBERSHIP

Swimmers in Senior 1 & 2 groups may join **USA Swimming** to compete in USA-sanctioned meets. This is **optional** and costs **\$80/year** (set by USA Swimming).

Swimmers in all other practice groups will **not participate in USA Swimming**.

# SWIM SEASONS & PRACTICE GROUPS

Seasons:

- **Short Course (Fall/Winter):** Late August–March\*
- **Long Course (Spring/Summer):** Late April–July\*
- **Summer Team:** May/June–July

*\*National qualifiers may extend beyond these dates.*

## Short Course & Long Course Group Placement and Practice Times

- Practices
  - Practices are held at the YMCA, generally **3:00–8:30 PM, Monday–Friday, based on practice group**
  - **Specific practice times** are posted on the team website.
  - Dryland and out-of-water conditioning may be included during this practice schedule and will be communicated by practice group coaches after the start of the season.
- Practice Groups
  - Swimmers are placed in groups by the coaching staff after evaluation.
  - Practice group placement takes into consideration a variety of factors including a swimmer's age, technical ability, maturity and race times achieved at meets.
  - 2025-2026 Short and Long Course Season Practice Groups:
    - Stingrays
    - Bronze
    - Silver
    - Gold
    - Pre-Senior
    - Senior 1
    - Senior 2
  - **Group changes happen at the beginning and end of Short Course or Long Course season** unless otherwise approved by the Head Coach.
  - Each swimmer will be **challenged and supported appropriately** within their group.

Summer Season Group Placement and Practice Times:

- Practices are held at the YMCA, generally **7:15am-9:45am, Monday–Friday, based on practice group**
- Summer Season Practice Groups:
  - 8 and Under
  - 9 and 10 Years Old
  - 11 and 12 Years Old
  - 13 and Up
- Each swimmer will be **challenged and supported appropriately** within their group.

# COMMUNICATION

## Communication Tools:

1. **Team Website:** <https://lakotaymca.com/lakota-ymca-stingrays-competitive-swim-team>

Used for general information:

- Practice & meet schedules
- Team fees
- Team store & equipment
- Forms and FAQs

2. **Email:**

Used for meet sign-ups, schedule updates, and team news.

All families must register **emails** in:

- **ACCOUNT (Parent/Guardian)**
- **MEMBER (Swimmer)**

3. **GroupMe:**

For **urgent, real-time updates** like:

- Weather changes
- Day-of-meet or team event reminders
- Emergencies
- This is **NOT** a forum to discuss issues or concerns with practices, coaches, other swimmers//families or individual matters. These should be discussed privately with the coaches.
  - Any message posted that does not meet this guidelines will be removed by the GroupMe's administrators

GroupMe Direct Messaging:

- Notify practice group coach of absence
- Parent board members questions about registration, volunteering, or processes

**All families must join their practice group's GroupMe.**

## Coach Contact Guidelines

- **The best time to speak with coaches is after practice.**
- You may also email coaches (emails are posted on the website) or send a note with your swimmer.
- Always contact your **practice group coach first**. If the issue is unresolved, contact the **Head Coach**.

## Parent Board Contact

For questions about registration, volunteering, or processes, email: [lakotaymcastingraysboard@gmail.com](mailto:lakotaymcastingraysboard@gmail.com)

# TEAM FEES & EXPENSES

## Team Fees

Team fees may be paid in full as a one-time payment or divided over a six-month period. Please note that choosing the six-month payment option does not represent a monthly subscription or a pay-as-you-go plan—you are committing to the entire season and the full payment amount, regardless of the installment schedule.

- Fees cover:
  - Pool rental
  - Coaches' salaries
  - Equipment
  - Scholarships
  - Team operations
- **Team fees are posted on the website.**

## Meet Fees

- Meets costs vary based on the meet. Costs for YMCA meets range from **\$5–\$10 per event**, plus possible **\$2–\$10 surcharges** per swimmer at championship meets.
- USA meet costs will vary so it is important to read the meet details in *TeamUnify*.
- Swimmers typically enter up to **2-4 events per session** plus **relays**.

## Meet Billing:

- All families must add a **credit card** to *TeamUnify*.
- Meet fees are invoiced on the **15th of the month following the meet**.
- **If you sign up for a meet but cancel after the deadline or do not attend, you are still responsible for meet fees.**
  - If a swimmer "no shows" for a relay, and a replacement athlete cannot be found, then the "no show" swimmer's family must pay the entirety of the scratched relay fee.

## Registration & Cancellation

- **New swimmers** must be evaluated before joining.
- Priority is given to swimmers who complete our Little Rays program or YMCA **Youth Stage 6 lessons** and are approved by coaches.
- To cancel, email the **Head Coach** and **YMCA Billing**. Outstanding balances will be charged at that time.

# MEET EXPECTATIONS

## General Meets

- Every swimmer must participate in at **least 3 swim meets** each season. Not only is this required for participation in championships in March, but if a swimmer does not meet this requirement, they will lose their spot on the team the following year.
- Swimmers are expected to arrive at the time communicated by the coaches **before warm-ups**, in **team suit and cap**, ready to swim.
- **Warm-up times** will be emailed as part of the meet information (please do not contact coaches for these).
- If a swimmer misses warm-ups without prior notice, they will be **scratched from their first event** (individual or relay). (*See Swimmer Code of Conduct for more details and associated fees*)

## Championships

- Swimmers must compete in **at least 3 YMCA meets** during the season to be eligible.
- Championship meets are the focus of the season. Participation is expected unless excused by the **Head Coach**.

## Meet Entries & Relays

- Coaches will select swimmer events based on **session availability provided by parents** in the *Notes* section during meet sign-up.
- Relay teams are selected based on swimmers' times, current performance, and what is best for the team.
- Unless a parent indicates otherwise, coaches will assume swimmers are available for all meet sessions.
- **Meet registration deadlines are final.** No late entries or changes will be accepted. (*See Swimmer Code of Conduct for more details and associated fees*)
- If a swimmer is unable to stay for the full meet and are in a relay, please communicate to the coaches as soon as possible.
  - If a swimmer "no shows" for a relay, and a replacement athlete cannot be found, then the "no show" swimmer's family must pay the entirety of the scratched relay fee.

# EQUIPMENT

## Team Swimsuit and Cap

We are a **Speedo-sponsored team**. Swimmers must wear **Speedo suits and equipment** at meets.

- All swimmers must purchase the **official team competition suit** as indicated at the start of each season, and are expected to wear it at each meet unless wearing a tech suit\*
- Team caps are required at all meets. Each swimmer receives one free cap per year. Additional/replacement caps will be billed at **\$10 per cap**.
- Team suits and practice gear can be purchased from [www.swimvilleusa.com](http://www.swimvilleusa.com).

**\*Technical “tech” suits** may only be worn at the direction of the Head Coach.

## Practice Equipment

- Swimmers must have required practice gear.
- Equipment should be maintained and cared for properly.
  - If a piece of equipment is lost or broken, it is expected to be replaced in a timely manner.
  - All equipment should be labeled to avoid confusion or misplacement.
- Team suits and practice gear can be purchased from [www.swimvilleusa.com](http://www.swimvilleusa.com)

## Spirit Wear

- Team spirit items like bags, shirts, and apparel are **optional** but encouraged!
- Links to our online team store will be communicated via coach emails and GroupMe.

Each practice group coach will communicate the required equipment prior to the start of the season. The list will also be available on the team website, practice group GroupMe chats and introduction emails from coaches.

# VOLUNTEERING

The success of the Lakota YMCA Stingrays Swim Team depends on the active involvement of our families. Swim meets and team events require many volunteers to run smoothly—timers, officials, meet marshals, hospitality, and more. These roles are essential for creating a positive, organized, and safe experience for our swimmers. Volunteering is not just a requirement; it's an opportunity to support your swimmer, build friendships with other families, and be part of the team community. When everyone pitches in, the workload is lighter and the season is more enjoyable for all. We appreciate your time and commitment—it truly makes a difference!

## Year- Round Volunteering

All swim team activities— meets, events, and fundraisers—are planned and run entirely by parent volunteers. Because we rely 100% on family participation to ensure the success of the team, each family will be required to fulfill a volunteer commitment during the season.

The Parent Board oversees the following committees, which help organize key team events and activities:

- **Events Committee** – Plans and coordinates the team's holiday celebration and the Short Course Champs celebration and team banquet.
- **Fundraising Committee** – Organizes fundraising efforts to support team needs and events.
- **Team Social Committee** – Creates opportunities for swimmers and families to connect outside of the pool such as the pasta dinner, trunk or treat participation and individual practice group team bonding events.
- **Championship & Banquet Committee** – Plans celebrations for the end of the Short Course season, including Champs recognition and the team banquet.

In addition to the committees, each team event, mock or intersquad meet as well as home invitational will have parent volunteers needed to ensure the success of the event.

Each year the number of volunteer credits required will be communicated upon receipt of the final enrollment numbers. Every family registered for the team will be required to complete the volunteer credits. To receive credit for your volunteering, you must sign in with the volunteer coordinator at each meet or Stingray event.

Each family that does not complete their volunteer credits will be assessed a \$250 fee at the end of the season. This fee will be automatically charged to your credit card on file.

## Summer Swim Team

The Stingrays host fun weekly summer activities, mock meets and at least 3 home meets each summer which are run solely by the Stingray families.

The Stingrays are required to provide at least 2 officials & 6-8 timers at away meets as well.

Each year the number of volunteer credits required will be communicated upon receipt of the final enrollment numbers. Every family registered for the team will be required to complete the volunteer credits. To receive credit for your volunteering, you must sign in with the volunteer coordinator at each meet or Stingray event.

Each family that does not complete their volunteer credits will be assessed a \$250 fee at the end of the season. This fee will be automatically charged to your credit card on file at the end of the season.

### **Championship Meets – Summer, Short & Long Course**

The team is assigned roles based on previous years participation.

If the team is not able to fill the assigned roles with volunteers still seeking their volunteer credits, names will be randomly drawn.

Any family who does not fulfill the assigned role will be charged any fines assessed by the league and a surcharge of \$50 that will be billed the following billing cycle.

### **Job Sign-Ups**

Volunteer job sign-ups will be available in TeamUnify under the Events section. Please only sign up for shifts you are committed to completing.

If you sign up for a shift, your attendance is required—there are no extra volunteers available to cover missed responsibilities.

If you are unable to fulfill a role you signed up for, you must find a replacement. If you are scheduled as an official and are unable to serve, you must both secure a qualified replacement and notify the Lakota YMCA

Stingrays Parent Board President as soon as possible. Failure to find a replacement will result in a \$50 fee that will be billed the following billing cycle.

# Code of Conduct – Swimmers and Parents

## Swimmer Code of Conduct

All swimmers are expected to uphold the values of respect, responsibility, and commitment. The following expectations apply to practices, meets, and all team-related events:

### 1. Practice Conduct and Dismissals

- If a swimmer is dismissed from practice due to behavior or other issues, they will be required to sit on the pool deck for the remainder of that practice.
- The Practice Group Coach will notify the swimmer's parent(s) via email within 24 hours after to explain the circumstances and any potential future actions.

### 2. Meet Participation Requirement

- Each swimmer must participate in at least three (3) swim meets per season.
- Participation in a minimum of three meets is required for eligibility in the Championships.
- Failure to meet this requirement may result in the swimmer not being guaranteed a spot on the team for the following season.
- Attending one session of a meet (e.g., Saturday AM only) is sufficient for that meet to count toward the three-meet requirement.

### 3. Meet Entries and Event Selection

- Coaches will select swimmer events based on **session availability provided by parents** in the *Notes* section during meet sign-up.
- Unless a parent indicates otherwise, coaches will assume swimmers are available for all meet sessions.
- **Meet registration deadlines are final.** No late entries or changes will be accepted.
- If a swimmer withdraws after the registration deadline, the family will be **charged for all missed events.**
- **Deck entries, if available,** may be permitted at the **discretion of the coaching staff.**

### 4. Timeliness Expectations

#### Practice:

- Swimmers must arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the start of practice and be dressed, ready, and in the water on time.
- If a scheduling issue arises, families should contact the swimmer's Practice Group Coach in advance via email or direct message on GroupMe

#### Meets:

- Swimmers must be in the pool at the beginning of warm-ups.
- If a swimmer misses warm-ups without prior notice, they will be **scratched from their first event** (individual or relay) and event fees will still be charged.
- **Exceptions** may be made **only if** a parent contacts the coaching staff **before** warm-ups begin.
- If their absence causes a **relay to scratch**, the **family will be charged the full relay fee.**

### 5. Behavior and Expectations

#### Equipment:

- Swimmers are responsible for bringing all required equipment to every practice.

- Equipment should be maintained properly. If a piece of equipment is lost or broken, it is expected to be replaced in a timely manner.
- All equipment should be labeled to avoid confusion or misplacement.

#### **Bullying Policy:**

Bullying is defined as repeated and/or severe behavior that is:

- Aggressive,
- Directed at another individual, and
- Intended or likely to hurt, control, or diminish another emotionally, physically, or sexually

#### **Disciplinary Process:**

**Step 1:** Conversation with swimmer + parent notification via email

**Step 2:** Meeting with swimmer and parent

**Step 3:** Suspension and/or removal from the team, depending on the severity of the behavior, at the **coaches' discretion**.

By participating on this team, swimmers agree to uphold these expectations to promote a positive, safe, and competitive environment for all.

## **Parent Code of Conduct**

To ensure a positive, respectful, and effective environment for all athletes, coaches, and families, all parents are expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

### **1. Coaching Authority and Athlete Practice Group Assignments**

- Coaches are responsible for all practice groups, lane assignments and training decisions.
- These decisions are made with each swimmer's best interests in mind. Please trust and support the professional judgment of the coaching staff.

### **2. Approaching Coaches**

- To maintain a focused training environment, **parents are not permitted to engage with coaches during practices or swim meets.**
- If you need to speak with a coach, please do so **before or after** practice or meets, or schedule a time via email.

### **3. Chain of Communication**

For **general questions** regarding the swim team, meets, or events, please follow this order:

1. Parent Board Member
2. Practice Group Coach
3. Head Coach

For **specific questions** or concerns regarding:

- Your own swimmer
- Another swimmer
- Another parent

Please first communicate with your swimmer's **Practice Group Coach** before escalating to the **Head Coach**.

By following this Code of Conduct, we can support a respectful, organized, and athlete-centered swim team environment. Thank you for your cooperation.

---

## **QUESTIONS?**

For team policies, communication, or concerns: [\*\*lakotaymcastinggraysboard@gmail.com\*\*](mailto:lakotaymcastinggraysboard@gmail.com)

---

**Let's work together to make this a great season!**