



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**PROGRAM GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICES  
YMCA COMPETITIVE SWIMMING AND DIVING PROGRAMS  
YMCA OF THE USA  
2013-2014**

This technical assistance paper describes sound practices and principles to help YMCAs effectively manage their competitive swimming and diving programs. In addition to this document, YMCAs should also review the "Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports", which all YMCA competitive sports programs must abide by.

**YMCA Mission and Cause**

The YMCA Mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all. Our cause is to strengthen community through youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Competitive swimming is a natural vehicle by which to deliver on the mission and cause with intention toward dignity and respect while striving for personal and team bests. Competition provides an excellent means of developing a predisposition toward fairness, dignity, and integrity. As these virtues develop, they influence behavior in everyday life. It is for the development of such virtues, as well as the opportunity for participants to learn about time management, team work, commitment and other important life skills, that the YMCA promotes competitive sports. (Directly from Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports)

**YMCA Identification and Control**

Teams representing local YMCAs in both closed YMCA competition and open competition should be identified with and remain under the complete control of the sponsoring YMCAs.

If a YMCA team chooses to become a member of a National Governing Body (eg. USA Swimming, USA Diving, AAU Diving) that team's membership charter with the NGB should include the **official name** of the sponsoring YMCA.

**YMCA Competition**

When YMCA teams participate in Open Competition (competition sponsored by National Governing Bodies involving teams from various organizations), they are governed by the rules and regulations set forth by those NGBs except where the rules and regulations of NGBs are in conflict with YMCA safety and insurance standards.

To be eligible for various YMCA championships, swimmers must participate in a certain number of closed YMCA inter-association (between two or more YMCA units) meets. A closed formal YMCA meet consists of: at least two teams from different YMCAs, a minimum of six swimmers from each team, a minimum of six events with one being a four person relay (four boys or four girls, not mixed), the presence of certified coaches for each team and the presence of at least two YMCA certified officials, one of whom should be the Referee. The meet shall be limited only to YMCAs. If a team from another organization participates in the meet, it is no longer a closed YMCA meet. When YMCA teams participate in closed YMCA competition they are governed by the "Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports" and any additional rules established by the YMCA committee responsible for that competition.

**Safety Considerations**

Lifeguards and coaches are essential to the safety of a Y's aquatic programming and help ensure that our swimmers enjoy a safe, fun aquatic experience. The following are safety practices designed to help protect competitive swimmers and prevent injuries.

**Supervision:** Ensure that all competitive swimming practices and competitions are actively supervised at all times by a lifeguard whose sole responsibility is to fulfill lifeguard duties. Do not have a coach serve simultaneously as a coach and a lifeguard. The duties of a coach and a lifeguard are task specific and require dedicated focus to perform effectively and safely. A coach cannot effectively perform the duties of coaching and vigilantly perform the duties of a lifeguard at the same time.

**Diving:** Allow diving instruction from the side of the pool, such as long shallow dives or standing dive, only in water that is at least nine feet deep. Competitive swimmers proficient in such dives can then perform racing starts during swim practices or competition only in the water that is at least five feet deep at the starting end of the pool. If the water is less than five feet deep, have swimmers in the water at the start of the race, performing a push start from the side of the pool. (Note: As of 2010, all major instructional agencies (Y-USA, the American Red Cross, USA Swimming, and USA Diving require basic diving instruction to occur in a minimum of nine feet of water).

When there is a difference in rules related to safety in competition, the Y, should first follow the YMCA regulations, and then the most conservative rules. Coaches attending away meets should remove their teams from competition in other YMCA facilities if the appropriate safety standards are not met.

Additional information regarding aquatics safety can be found on the Aquatics Safety page of Exchange (<https://yexchange.org/AquaticsSafety>), in the *YMCA Aquatic Management: A Guide to Effective Leadership manual, On the Guard: The YMCA Lifeguard Manual (5<sup>th</sup> edition)*, online *Principles of YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving*.

*\*NOTE: Starting January 1, 2014 the Principles course will only be offered online.*

### **Membership Requirements**

All YMCA athletes must be full privilege members of the YMCA that they represent, as established by the "Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports".

If a YMCA has established a special membership category for the participants on its competitive teams that is a different from the full privilege memberships provided for other youth and adults, those individuals are in violation of the "Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports" and are ineligible for YMCA competition.

YMCA Teams and members of YMCA teams that desire to participate in open competition sponsored by a National Governing Body (NGB) must register with that NGB, pay the appropriate registration fees, and adhere to the rules and regulations established by the NGB for those competitions.

### **Association Teams, Branch Teams, and Mergers**

A YMCA association with multiple branches may have one association-wide competitive which includes members from multiple branches, or it may have multiple competitive teams each identified with one of the branches. If the team is an association-wide team, it must compete as such in both closed and open meets for the entire competitive season. It may not compete as separate branch teams in some competitions and as one association team for others. Competitions between branches or sites of a single association-wide team are considered intrasquad meets, not inter-association meets. Members of association teams must have YMCA memberships that are recognized fully at all branches of the association (metro memberships).

Occasionally, YMCAs want to merge their competitive teams. In order for this to occur, one of the merging YMCAs must be designated as the official YMCA and all athletes (if they are planning to represent that YMCA in inter-association competition) must have full privilege memberships in that YMCA. It is not permissible for some of the athletes to have memberships in one of the merging YMCAs and the remaining members of the team to have memberships in the other merging YMCA(s). The executive directors or CEOs and the Board of Directors of each YMCA must agree on the merger and approve the process.

### **Service Areas**

Although individuals are free to become members and/or participate in the programs of any YMCA of their choosing, each YMCA is chartered by the YMCA of the USA to operate in a designated service area. YMCAs cannot operate programs within the service area of another YMCA without that YMCA's permission. Therefore, a swim team that is affiliated with one YMCA cannot practice or conduct meets in the service area of another YMCA without that YMCA's permission.

### **Personnel**

Coaches of YMCA teams should be employees or volunteers of the YMCA, hired and supervised by a member of the YMCA staff, not a parents organization or an independent club. YMCAs should follow their current hiring and screening procedures when hiring or assigning coaches. This includes conducting in-depth interviews, researching a candidate's credentials, checking references and performing background checks and drug tests as established by the YMCA's human resources officer or department.

Once hired, coaches are subject to either the personnel policies or volunteer policies of the YMCA. Head coaches should be treated as YMCA professionals and should be included in staff meetings and training opportunities. They should be held to the same standards and protocols as other program directors and they should be consulted on matters that affect the competitive swimming and diving program. Coaches should be encouraged to participate in both YMCA and sport-specific trainings in order to constantly improve their ability to develop the youth and children involved in the competitive swimming and diving program.

It is important to maintain a cooperative relationship and regular communication between the YMCA leadership and the competitive swimming and diving leadership. All coaches and directors share responsibility in preserving a positive and supportive environment.

When attending meets at sites other than his/her own YMCA, the head coach is the official representative of that YMCA and is ultimately responsible for the conduct and behavior of the swimmers, coaches, parents, and spectators accompanying the team.

All coaches must maintain current basic-level certifications in the following areas (Instructor certifications are not acceptable):

- Professional Rescuer CPR
- First Aid\*
- Safety Training for Swim Coaches\*
- Principles of YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving\*\*

\*Refer to the [Safety Certification Requirements for Swim Coaches document](#) for acceptable or equivalent certifications.

\*\*The Principles course is offered online and should be completed within the first 90 days of employment.

## **Parents' Organizations**

Participants in parents' organizations are program volunteers who assist YMCA staff in the operation of the competitive swimming and diving program. Parents' organizations are advisory bodies that are accountable to the YMCA staff and should not operate as a policy making committee. All policy decisions affecting the competitive swimming and diving program should be made by the program director or head coach with the support of his/her direct YMCA supervisor and with consideration given to the input and suggestions of the parents organization.

Parents' organizations should not hire and fire program coaches, raise money for projects outside the knowledge and parameters of the YMCA or control a separate bank account for the competitive swimming program. They are not legally responsible and cannot make any decisions to bind or obligate the YMCA. The following are the duties and responsibilities within the local YMCA structure:

Corporate Board: The legally responsible, governing body for the YMCA that sets broad policy for the entire YMCA, hires the executive director, controls/approves all local YMCA budgets, sets guiding philosophies for the YMCA, has all legal responsibility for the local YMCA and has ultimate control of all bank accounts, income, and expense, and conducts fund-raising.

Staff: Implements policies set by the Board, supports the day-to-day administration of the activities, oversees all finances and all bank accounts of the YMCA, proposes the budget to corporate boards, supports fund-raising efforts on behalf of the YMCA, makes programmatic plans and decisions, hires and supervises all staff and program volunteers, oversees fundraising efforts, to assure that they are consistent with the YMCA's fundraising policies.

Advisory Committee or Parents Group: Supports the programs of the local YMCA, highlights accomplishments of local YMCA programs as selected by corporate board and implemented by staff; raises funds as directed by YMCA staff or the Corporate Board and sees that all funds raised, from whatever source, are given to YMCA staff for deposit into YMCA corporate bank account.

All programs operated in the YMCA name or out of YMCA facilities must be under the supervision of YMCA staff and under the control of the Corporate Chartered Board of Directors for the local YMCA.

## **Financial Management and Advice on Control of Local YMCA Money and Programs**

It is critical for the YMCA's maintenance of its nonprofit status and for other tax purposes that all funds raised or used for YMCA programs are channeled through the YMCA accounting system and are under the direct control of YMCA staff and the Corporate Board. Only in this way can all funds collected and used for YMCA purposes be reported on IRS form 990, as required by federal law. It will also help to prevent the misuse or inappropriate use of the funds and the YMCA's federal tax exemption. It is illegal for organizations to have funds in outside accounts using the YMCA's tax ID number.

Funds earmarked as "custodial" accounts should become the property of the YMCA if a group disbands or leaves the sponsorship of the association. Additionally, any equipment purchased in the name of, or on behalf of, the YMCA or a YMCA program, is property of the YMCA.

Fund raising by competitive teams should be organized and conducted under the direct control of the YMCA to ensure that these efforts are consistent with the association's fund raising policies and do not interfere with other solicitations being made by the YMCA in the

community. Funds that are raised "in the name of" or utilizing the name of the YMCA are legally YMCA funds. A careful understanding should be established with the groups affected concerning how they might access funds for approved use.

### **Insurance**

YMCAs should check with their insurance carriers to ensure that staff and volunteers involved in their competitive swimming programs are covered by liability insurance. Particular attention should be given to the coverage provided for away meets and meets not held within the YMCA facility. Consideration should also be given to coverage for those individuals (coaches, parents, swimmers) who provide transportation for swimmers to and from away meets. All coaches and volunteers should be provided with an orientation to the local YMCA's child abuse prevention policies.

### **Swim Officials Certification**

A Swim Officials' Certification module has been incorporated into the YMCA of the USA Program Training Certification System. Each YMCA is encouraged to have a sufficient number of YMCA certified officials to officiate at its home and away dual meets. Larger YMCA teams are also encouraged to have at least one person certified as a Swim Officials' Trainer.

YMCAs are expected to have certified YMCA Swim Officials on the deck at all meets. (For a meet to be recognized as a qualifying closed competition meet, it must be officiated by at least two YMCA Certified Officials, one of whom must be the Referee).

The YMCA Swim Officials' Certification Program involves two basic levels of certification. Level I Certified Officials are trained to take on the roles of a stroke & turn judge, place judge, relay take-off judge, timer or scorer. Level II Certified Officials are authorized to act as referees, starters, and chief judges, in addition to any of the Level I positions.

YMCA Swim Officials certifications are valid for three years.

Prerequisites for Level I and Level II certification and re-certification, and for becoming a certified YMCA Swim Officials' Trainer are listed on the YMCA of Competitive Swimming and Diving website ([www.ymcaswimminganddiving.org](http://www.ymcaswimminganddiving.org))

### **YMCA Branding**

All YMCAs are to be in alignment with the YMCA of the USA brand standards by December 31, 2015. Information on branding can be found on the [Exchange](http://www.yexchange.org) website or [Brand Resource Center](#). For additional questions please contact your YMCA's Brand Advocate.

### **Resources**

The resources listed below are to assist YMCAs with the administration of their competitive swimming and diving programs. These may be found on the YMCA of Competitive Swimming and Diving website, [www.ymcaswimminganddiving.org](http://www.ymcaswimminganddiving.org), YMCA Exchange website ([www.yexchange.org](http://www.yexchange.org)), or in manuals available through the YMCA Program Store (1-800-747-0089).

#### **[YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving Website](#)**

- The Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports
- YMCA Competitive Swimming Black Book
- YMCA National Swimming and Diving Championship Meet Information

- Coaches Safety Certification Requirements

#### [Y Exchange](#)

- YMCA Child Abuse Prevention Guidelines
- Aquatics Safety Guidelines for Ys
- YMCA Branding Guide
- Principles of YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving course (through LCDC page)

#### [YMCA Program Store](#)

- YMCA of Aquatic Management: A Guide to Effective Leadership
- On the Guard: The YMCA Lifeguard Manual (5<sup>th</sup> edition)

The following training courses are available for YMCA swimming coaches and officials:

- Principles of YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving
- Swim Officials Level I
- Swim Officials Level II
- Swim Officials Trainer