



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

SWIMMING ADDENDUM TO THE RULES THAT GOVERN YMCA COMPETITIVE SPORTS

September 2024

The Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports must be followed at all levels of YMCA competition. The rules are written for all competitive sports in the YMCA and not specifically for swimming. This addendum provides additional explanation of the rules as applied to YMCA Swimming. Coaches, athletes and YMCA supervisors are responsible for knowing and abiding by the Rules That Govern, as well as this Addendum.

COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION

The Y is made up of people of all ages and from every walk of life working side by side to strengthen communities. We are committed to providing equitable access and a sense of belonging for all individuals. YMCA staff and volunteers work together to ensure that everyone, regardless of ability, age, cultural background, ethnicity, faith, gender, gender identity and expression, ideology, income, national origin, race or sexual orientation has the opportunity to reach their full potential with dignity. Our core values—caring, honesty, respect and responsibility—guide everything we do. YMCA swimming programs, events and all individuals involved therein will reflect this commitment.

SWIMMER ELIGIBILITY

YMCA Membership

A member of a YMCA swim team must have a full-privilege YMCA membership that entitles him or her to the same activities and services as other full-privilege YMCA members, not special limited-access memberships available only to swim team members. (Rule I) This membership requirement promotes the development of supportive relationships and a sense of belonging within a local YMCA community where critical learning and development occurs.

A swimmer must be a member in good standing of his/her YMCA for **30 days** prior to the first day of a YMCA meet in which he/she competes. The swimmer must be a member in good standing of his/her YMCA for **90 days** prior to the first day of a district, regional, state or national championship meet in which he/she competes. (Rule IV Sec.2) The membership status must be valid through the end of the competition.

Nationwide / Reciprocal Y Membership and Swim Teams

Many YMCAs participate in *Nationwide YMCA Membership* or permit access to their facilities based on an individual's membership at another YMCA unit, branch or association. This typically grants access to facilities and not programs.

In YMCA competitive sports programs, including swimming, participants must maintain a full privilege membership at the YMCA they represent in competition. This is their "home" or "primary" YMCA, to which their YMCA membership and swim team membership dues are paid.

Dual Representation (Rule IV Sec.4)

Rule I defines dual representation as occurring when "an athlete represents more than one team during the current season in a particular sport." Because it is possible for YMCA teams to hold membership in USA Swimming, and thus compete against non-YMCA teams in USA Swimming meets (which are considered open competition), it is a violation of the dual representation rule for a swimmer to represent a YMCA team and a separate USA Swimming team during the current season.

USA Swimming competition is open because although all teams and swimmers must be members of USA Swimming, teams with other affiliations (YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, prep school, college) are permitted to join and participate.

YMCA Swimming competition is closed because only YMCA teams and swimmers may participate. Other examples of closed competition include interscholastic (e.g. high school) competition and summer league competition in which only member teams of a local summer league compete.

A YMCA swimmer may represent his/her interscholastic institution (e.g. High school) in closed interscholastic competition. (Rule IV Sec. 4a)

A YMCA swimmer may represent a local summer league team that is different than his/her YMCA team in closed league competition.

When a YMCA team is not also registered with USA Swimming, a member of that YMCA team may participate in USA Swimming competitions as an *Unattached* swimmer. A member of a YMCA team may practice with a separate USA Swimming club, if permitted by the YMCA team's coach/director, but needs to be aware of the YMCA dual representation and transfer rules. YMCA leagues, states and regions have the right to further restrict such dual participation.

A swimmer may represent only his/her YMCA in closed or open competition for a period of at least 90 days prior to the first day of a YMCA championship meet. Exceptions are noted above for closed interscholastic competition and local summer league competition. A swimmer may represent his or her high school in closed interscholastic competition and not be in violation of this rule. When an interscholastic institution, usually a prep or boarding school, offers a swimming program which also competes in open (USA Swimming) competition, a YMCA swimmer may not represent the school in open competition and still be in compliance of the permissible dual representation rule. He or she may compete in the open competition but must be unattached.

Transfers

YMCA Team to YMCA Team

Swimmers who wish to change their membership from one YMCA to another may do so through **Transfer by Consent** (Rule IV Sec.3). A swimmer may transfer from one YMCA team to another YMCA team and be eligible to compete for his/her new YMCA team immediately upon the written consent of the YMCA that he/she previously represented. This includes transfer from one association branch to another. The membership transfer must be completed BEFORE the individual competes for the new association or branch. A Transfer by

Consent Form may be found in the Rules That Govern and must be signed by the CEO or executive director of the YMCA from which the swimmer is transferring. However, the swimmer must still be a full privilege member of a YMCA - any YMCA - for 30 days prior to the first day of a YMCA meet in which they compete and be a full privilege member of a YMCA - any YMCA - for at least 90 days prior to the first day of a YMCA district, regional, state or national championship meet in which they compete. Transfer by Consent forms should be kept by the YMCA to which the swimmer transfers and a copy should be sent to the regional representative.

Non-YMCA Team to YMCA Team

A swimmer may not represent both a YMCA team and a separate USA Swimming team during the current season unless a permanent transfer (lasting the remainder of the current season) occurs from one team to the other. A swimmer who wishes to transfer from a non-YMCA team (USA Swimming team) to a YMCA team during the current season must observe the YMCA membership rules as stated in the Rules That Govern. To be eligible to compete in any YMCA championship meet, including a YMCA National Championship meet, a swimmer may not have represented any organization other than his/her YMCA team (with the exception of closed interscholastic competition) for at least 90 days prior to the first day of the YMCA championship meet.

YMCA Team to Non-YMCA Team

A swimmer may transfer from a YMCA team to a non-YMCA team at any time but once he or she represents that non-YMCA team in competition, the YMCA 90-day representation rule is in effect.

Amateur Status

Applying the definition of an amateur (Rule I), an individual may not have represented a college, university or other post-high school institution in any competition and may not have accepted pay or compensation for competing as a swimmer.

Unattached Swimmers

There is no "unattached" designation in YMCA Swimming. All swimmers must compete as full members of a YMCA team and, thus, satisfy the YMCA membership requirements and be covered under that YMCA's insurance. See also the section titled, *YMCA Without a Swim Team*.

YMCA Meet Participation

In order for an athlete to be eligible to compete in sanctioned YMCA championship competitions, he or she must have competed in a minimum number of closed inter-association YMCA meets during the current season. That number is determined by the league, region or other entity sponsoring the championship meet. For YMCA National Championship meets, an athlete must have competed in three closed inter-association YMCA meets plus one sanctioned YMCA championship meet since September 1 of the current season.

To compete is defined as swimming in at least one meet event to completion (without taking a declared false start). Time trial meets do not satisfy this YMCA meet participation requirement.

Eligibility Waivers

According to Rule IX, a coach may request a waiver on behalf of a swimmer for one or more meet eligibility requirements. The request is submitted in writing to the Meet Committee and Meet Director as early as possible, but no less than one week prior to the meet entry

deadline. The Meet Committee and Meet Director will discuss the circumstances and make a determination expeditiously. For the YMCA National Championship Meets, waiver requests are sent to the National Eligibility Committee Chairperson using [the electronic waiver request form](#). The earlier the request is submitted, the more the committee can work with the team to meet minimum requirements for a waiver.

With all waiver requests, the coach requesting the waiver for his/her athlete(s) should demonstrate that dedicated good faith efforts have been made by the coach, athlete, parents and team to meet the stated eligibility requirements for the meet.

Adult (18 and Older) Athlete Requirement

In compliance with the U.S. Center for SafeSport's standards, YMCA athletes age 18 and older complete Athlete Protection Training every 12 months. Options include [USA Swimming Athlete Protection Training](#) – Required for all athletes age 18 and older who are members of USA Swimming

[U.S. Center for SafeSport](#) – *SafeSport Trained* course

[Praesidium](#) – *YUSA Competitive Sports Learning Path* (includes Athlete Protection Part I, Part II and Duty to Report: Mandated Reporter)

COACH ELIGIBILITY

All YMCA coaches are expected to:

- 1) Hold current safety certifications as outlined below.
- 2) Complete the annual YMCA coach registration process prior to the deadline.

Each individual coach is responsible for maintaining these two aspects of his/her eligibility.

Safety Certifications In the interest of maintaining the highest level of safety, the YMCA of the USA standard for **all** coaches who work with YMCA swimmers is to maintain current certification in the following areas (*Note: Instructor certifications and online-only CPR and First Aid courses are not acceptable.*).

The [complete list](#) of providers and acceptable CPR, First Aid and Lifeguard courses is found on the YMCA Swimming and Diving website and on LINK.

1. Basic Life Support (Professional Rescuer CPR)

Note: Following the recommendation of the YMCA Medical Advisory Board, the YMCA requires annual recertification of CPR, regardless of the certification period indicated by the organization issuing the certificate.

2. First Aid

3. Safety Training for Swim Coaches

There are two parts of the Safety Training for Swim Coaches certification: the online course content and the in-water skills. Both must be completed for certification.

- Go to www.redcross.org/takeaclass to access the *Safety Training for Swim Coaches Online Content*.
- Using the YMCA In-Water Skills Checklist, complete the skills check with a certified Lifeguard instructor.
- If a coach has an approved ([see list](#)) valid Lifeguard or YMCA Aquatic Safety Assistant certification, that certification takes the place of the In-water Skills Checklist.

4. Principles of YMCA Swimming and Diving

- This course is offered online through the Learning and Career Development Center (LCDC) on LINK (lcdc.yexchange.org). There is an online portion as well as a workbook with planning activities and a series of meetings with YMCA leaders. A certificate is issued when the online portion is complete. The

completed workbook portion of the course is then uploaded to the YMCA swim coach registration site for review by the regional representative.

5. Child/Athlete Protection Training

All coaches annually complete an approved child protection training course that contains sexual abuse prevention and mandated reporter components. See the Certification Requirements for Swim Coaches [document](#) on LINK or the YMCA Swimming and Diving website for approved providers and courses.

Concussion Awareness

The YMCA of the USA encourages participation in concussion awareness training. Some states mandate training for youth sports including swimming. Check with your state for requirements. For YMCA National Championship competition, all parents and athletes are required to read and sign the Concussion Awareness Form during the meet entry procedure. In addition, there is a specific protocol in effect during the meet when any head injury occurs. More information may be found on the [YMCA swimming and diving website](#).

Annual YMCA Team and Coach Registration

Each year, YMCA teams and coaches complete an online YMCA Swimming registration. This process creates an important communication and data collection link between the national, regional and local levels of YMCA Swimming. The registration portal is accessed through the regional YMCA websites or the [YMCA swimming and diving website](#).

Deadlines: December 1 (Short Course Season); July 1 (Long Course Season)

Certifications will not be verified, and coach's deck passes will not be activated after these dates.

Team Registration

- \$50, payable to YMCA of the USA
- Required for team participation in any YMCA sanctioned (championship or invitational) meet

Coach Registration

- Applies to all YMCA coaches
- Free between Sept. 1 and Dec. 1 and between April 3 and July 1.
- Requires \$100 fee between Dec. 2 and April 2 and between July 2 and August 1.
- Upload electronic copies of current certifications, indicated above, in the designated fields
- Once registered and approved, the coach's YMCA deck pass is available through TeamUnify's free OnDeck app (this is available to all coaches, not only those teams that are TeamUnify customers)
- To ensure compliance with YMCA coach eligibility standards, meet directors for YMCA sanctioned meets will check coach registrations and certifications either through a list provided by the regional representative or by viewing each coach's mobile deck pass. Only registered coaches with current certifications are permitted on deck.

ELIGIBILITY OF ASSOCIATIONS AND TEAMS

Definition of an Association

As defined in Rule II, an Association is certified by the Board of Directors of the National Council of YMCAs, holds an Association branch or unit number and is eligible for separate listing in the YMCA Directory. For the purpose of competition only, an Association branch, department or center of a Metropolitan Association shall be considered an Association.

A Metropolitan Association must decide whether to operate a competitive swimming program that represents the association as a whole, or to have each of its branches operate its own team. A YMCA team must compete under one name and association number during the given season. The association number matches the name in the YMCA Directory. A YMCA team may not represent a branch (having one association number) during part of the season and the association (that has a different association number than the branch) as a whole during another. Likewise, multiple YMCA branch teams may not compete as one association team in USA Swimming meets, but separate teams in YMCA meets.

USA Swimming Team and YMCA Name

Each YMCA team may hold only one USA Swimming team membership. A YMCA team may not be part of more than one USA Swimming team membership (Cannot be comprised of swimmers of more than one USA Swimming team). YMCA teams MUST have their official YMCA name as listed in the national YMCA directory on their USA Swimming Certificate of Insurance.

A YMCA team may not have two separate entities within one team (e.g. a YMCA component and a USA Swimming component) where only those who compete in YMCA meets are YMCA members. All members of a team registered as a YMCA team must be members of that YMCA.

YMCA without a Swim Team

If an Association does not sponsor a swimming team, an eligible athlete from that Association may participate in the National Championship Meet representing his/her own YMCA, provided the entry is approved by the regional representative in that region and by the National Championship Meet Eligibility Committee. (Rule IV) The athlete should also be under the supervision of certified YMCA coach from another YMCA. Leagues, districts, states and regions are encouraged to afford the same privileges.

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.

COMPETITION

The YMCA of the USA views competition as a means by which the principles of youth development are emphasized and celebrated. Healthy competition promotes a dedicated effort to realize one's potential with dignity, integrity and sportsmanship. At all levels, YMCA competitions promote this healthy competition and not a "winning at all costs" attitude. The structure of YMCA competition progresses from local to league, regional and national levels, thus creating and ever-expanding supportive community in which youth build relationships, develop a sense of belonging and achieve their full potential.

Closed and Open Competition

Closed competition refers to competition in which only YMCA teams and swimmers may compete.

Open competition refers to competition in which teams and swimmers representing any organization compete. This may or may not include YMCA teams and swimmers. (Rule I)

Current Season

The current season in YMCA Swimming season is September 1-August 31.

Age

For the purpose of recognizing YMCA National Championship qualifying times, National YMCA Records and YMCA Top 16 times, a swimmer's age is determined by his or her age on the first day of competition. Following this standard at all levels ensures consistency for athletes.

Technical Rules

The YMCA National Championship meets are conducted according to the current USA Swimming technical rules. For times to be eligible for the YMCA National Championship Meets, YMCA Top 16 and YMCA National Records, they must be achieved in meets that are conducted using USA Swimming technical rules.

Competition Category

As an inclusive community, the YMCA welcomes all individuals to participate in its programs without fear or discrimination. An athlete may compete in the competition category – male or female – in which they identify. This declaration is made at the beginning of the competition year – September 1 - or the first day of the swimmer's participation, whichever is later. This also aligns with the policy of USA Swimming, the national governing body for the sport.

Swimwear Exceptions

A swimmer may request an [exemption](#) from the USA Swimming swimwear rules for religious, medical, gender identity or other reasons. An exemption is valid for the current competition year (September 1-August 31) and must be shown to the meet referee prior to the start of a competition. Swimmers who compete in both USA Swimming and YMCA meets submit the request to the Chair of the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations Committee. Swimmers who compete only in YMCA competition submit the request to the Chair of the YMCA Swim Officials Committee.

Safety Guidelines

The YMCA of the USA has established the following recommended guidelines for the conduct of all YMCA practices and competitions:

- Per the YMCA Child Abuse Prevention and Aquatic Safety Membership Qualification, certified lifeguards are on duty at all times and have the sole responsibility of guarding the pool(s). Coaches who hold lifeguard certification are not to be considered on-duty lifeguards while actively coaching.
- Pool depth is at least five feet at any end of the pool where racing dives will be performed. If the pool water depth at the starting end of the pool is less than the prescribed five feet, all swimmers must start their races in the water.
- Pool depth is at least nine feet at any end of the pool where diving instruction will be given.
- Starting blocks are used only under the direct supervision of a certified coach.
- During an electrical storm, YMCA of the USA advises that practices and competitions be suspended, and the pool deck is cleared. This applies to indoor and outdoor pools. The pool may be re-opened 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or lightning is last seen.
- Extended breath-holding and any hyperventilation are both prohibited.
- Changing into or out of swimsuits other than in locker rooms or other designated areas is not appropriate and is prohibited.

- The use of cell phones or other devices with photo or video capability is prohibited in locker rooms, restrooms and other changing areas.
- Operation of a drone, or any other flying apparatus, is prohibited over the venue (pools, athlete/coach areas, spectator areas and open-ceiling locker rooms) any time athletes, coaches' officials and/or spectators are present.

These guidelines are subject to current local, state, and federal laws and ordinances. In the event of a conflict between such laws and ordinances and these guidelines, follow the more stringent of the two. In addition, when there is a difference in rules related to safety in competition, the Y team should first follow the YMCA regulations, and then the most conservative rules.

YMCA aquatics safety resources to help guide the formulation of local YMCA policies and procedures can be found in the [YMCA Aquatic Safety Guidelines](#), YMCA Child Protection and Aquatic Safety Membership Qualification FAQ's, and Aquatic Safety Resource Documents on the Aquatic Safety page on [LINK](#).

Safe Sport and Athlete Protection

The YMCA is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all, especially in preventing abuse of any kind.

YMCA Child Abuse Prevention and Aquatic Safety Membership Qualification – This membership qualification (commonly called a membership standard) establishes minimum safety practices for YMCAs in the areas of child abuse prevention and aquatic safety.

All member associations are required to annually confirm adherence to these safety practices to maintain their status as a YMCA. Refer to the [Policy Checklist](#) for the Child Abuse Prevention and Aquatic Safety Membership Qualification.

Federal Safe Sport Law - the YMCA of the USA recommends that all local YMCAs offering youth sports programs, including competitive swimming, establish policies and procedures that comply with the requirements of the federal Safe Sport Law. It is imperative that all YMCA swim team staff, volunteers and parents are aware of their local YMCA requirements and that they follow them.

YMCA National events (YMCA Short Course, Long Course and Diving National Championships) will comply fully with the Safe Sport Law. This includes:

- Complete a background screening within the past two years - all coaches and volunteers
- Complete an approved athlete protection training within the past 12 months - all coaches, volunteers and athletes age 18 and older
- Sign a code of conduct for the event - all coaches, volunteers and athletes age 18 and older

Information about the Safe Sport Law and YMCA compliance may be found on [LINK](#) and the [YMCA swimming and diving website](#).

YMCA Inter-association Meets

Closed YMCA inter-association meets provide an opportunity for swimmers to challenge themselves individually while being part of a larger team effort, representing their YMCA community. In order to achieve this purpose and create this learning experience, the following minimum standards exist for such meets:

- At least two (2) teams from different YMCA associations (different association numbers) take part.

- At least six (6) competitors from each team participate, except in sanctioned championship meets for which there are time standard requirements.
- At least five (5) individual events are contested in the meet. A "distance" meet in which a minimum of two (2) individual events, each 400 yards/meters or longer, are contested will be considered a valid YMCA meet as long as the number of teams and swimmers required still applies.
- The number of events is based on the distance and stroke, not male and female designation or age group designation. For example, offering men's 1000 Freestyle and women's 1000 Freestyle is one event – 1000 Freestyle.
- Certified officials conduct the meet (in all cases at least two officials must be YMCA Certified including one certified as a Level II Official who acts as the Meet Referee):
 - Dual Meets require at least three (3) officials including a Starter, a Referee and an Administrative Official. The Starter and Referee may also serve as Stroke & Turn judges, if necessary.
 - All other meets require at least four (4) officials including a Referee, a Starter (who may also act as a Stroke & Turn judge), a Stroke & Turn judge and an Administrative Official.
 - Any YMCA Level II Certified Official can function as the Administrative Official, but not in that role and another deck role (e.g. the Deck Referee cannot also serve as the Admin Official)
 - USA Swimming Certified Officials may assist with the officiating at such meets, provided that there are at least two YMCA Certified Officials, one of whom is YMCA Level II certified and acts as the Meet Referee.

Additional regulations:

- An [application](#) may be made to the National Eligibility Committee for pre-approval to count participation in two or more days of a closed YMCA invitational as two YMCA meets. In order to take advantage of this special allowance, a swimmer must compete in at least two separate days of the meet. **This is intended only for teams that are located at a significant geographical distance from other YMCA teams.**
- A dual meet cannot serve for two YMCA meets, even if it is scheduled over two days.
- A single meet, regardless of length of days contested, may not be counted both as one of the closed inter-association meets and a sanctioned championship meet for the purpose of satisfying those qualification requirements for YMCA Nationals.
- A single closed YMCA meet – a dual, tri, invitational, etc. – may not be counted as separate dual meets. For example, a tri meet may not be counted as two dual meets.

YMCA Championship Meets

YMCA championship meets must be conducted as formal competition (Rule I) in which:

- Teams or individuals are officially designated by a local YMCA to represent that YMCA
- Entry fees are charged
- Standings are kept
- Awards are given

YMCA Sanctioned Meets

The purpose of a YMCA sanction is to verify that a YMCA invitational or championship meet is conducted according to the YMCA national meet standards. Dual meets are not eligible for a YMCA sanction.

A sanction ensures that:

- A meet is conducted according to YMCA national standards

- The meet has met the minimum standards to apply for USA Swimming Approval and have its results entered into the USA Swimming SWIMS database

Participation in a sanctioned YMCA *championship* meet is also a requirement for a swimmer to be eligible to participate in a YMCA National Championship meet.

Sanction application, payment and supporting documents must be submitted online through the YMCA swimming and diving website at least 60 days prior to the first day of the meet.

Please refer to the [YMCA Sanctioned Meets document](#) for a checklist of requirements for YMCA sanctioned meets and an explanation of those requirements.

Use of High School and Other Times for Meet Entry

High school swim meets are swum under NFHS rules, which differ slightly from the USA-S technical rules in a number of areas. For a time from a high school meet to be accepted, that meet must have been observed by USA-S or YMCA officials in accordance with USA-S Rule 202.7. The printed results of the event must show the USA-S Observed Meet number issued by the LSC and must be signed by one of the USA-S or YMCA observers. Most high school meets are not observed meets and arrangements for a meet to be observed must be made well in advance of the meet. Coaches hoping to use a time from such a meet should contact the meet director in advance to determine whether the meet will be observed.

Swimmers with Disabilities

The YMCA National Championship meets include the participation of swimmers with a disability who have been nationally or internationally classified, as well as having met the Y membership and meet participation eligibility requirements for the meet. The qualifying standard for swimmers with disabilities at the YMCA National Championship Meets will be the Can-Am Paralympic time standards in their classification.

Local YMCA meets are encouraged to include athletes with disabilities as well. While the Can-Am Para time standards are used at the national level, other YMCA meets should waive time standards or set them no faster than Can-Am standards for these athletes.

Classification occurs at designated World Para Swimming Sanctioned Meets (for International Classification) and at U.S. Para Swimming Sanctioned Meets (for National Classification)

Swim Officials Certification

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 three certified officials, including an Administrative Official. At least two of the officials must be YMCA Certified Officials, one of whom must be a Level II official who acts as the Referee.

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.

The YMCA Swim Officials' Certification Program involves three categories 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. Administrative Officials are authorized to handle the administrative aspects of the meet, including determining the official times and order of finish.

YMCA Swim Officials certifications are valid for three years.

Prerequisites for Level I, Level II and Administrative Official certification and re-certification, and for becoming a certified YMCA Swim Officials' Trainer are listed on the [YMCA swimming and diving website](#) as well as in the [LCDC](#).