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DOLPHINS SWIM TEAM
Parent Handbook
WHATCOM FAMILY YMCA

Dolphins Swim Team

WHATCOM FAMILY YMCA

Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to prepare parents of children who are members of, or are considering joining, the Whatcom Family YMCA Dolphins Swim Team. We hope that you find the time to read this handbook in its entirety, for it is an established fact that the positive influence of a swimmer's parents is essential for success. There are virtually no swimmers who have been successful without supportive parents.

As a "Swimming Parent", you will have responsibilities, but more importantly, you will have opportunities – opportunities to really "get to know" your child in pressure situations; opportunities to praise and applaud his/her achievements; and even more importantly, opportunities to help him/her deal with their non-achievements – to redirect them – to learn from them – and, in the end, to gain from them. In today's fast-paced society, there are far too few chances for parents to interact with their children on this kind of basic level. Just these opportunities alone will make your experience in swimming worthwhile.

Swim Team Program Focus and YMCA Philosophy

The Whatcom Family YMCA Dolphins Swim Team is designed for swimmers who wish to pursue competitive swimming in a fun and positive environment.

The YMCA swim team staff is dedicated to give families involved in swim team a great experience while providing fitness and fun to children of all ages. We will strive to help each child develop a healthy, spirit, mind and body.

We will help your children to gain self confidence, goal setting abilities, physical fitness, and character.

The following are our goals:

- We will help children reach their full potential as a swimmer.
- We will help children learn good sportsmanship and the purpose of being on a team.
- We will promote lifelong fitness.
- We will teach children the character development with Honesty, Caring, respect and Responsibility.

Participation on swim team teaches life lessons in how members of teams work together as individuals to become one unit. With everyone working and supporting each other as a team, we are sure this season will be successful.

Sports are supposed to be good for kids. In theory, a sport should build strong bodies, not tear them down. It should promote sportsmanship, self-discipline and perseverance. Swimming is a sport in the true sense of the word. It is a pursuit of a striving for excellence. Its very nature demands self-discipline and great sense of purpose. Swimmers learn early the relationship between hard work and results.

The YMCA mission is: To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

Swimmer Requirements

All swimmers of the Whatcom Family YMCA Dolphins Swim Team must be a member of the YMCA.

Swimmers must have passed Minnow/Fish Level or equivalent. (Generally, be able to comfortably swim 50 yards of freestyle and backstroke and respond to coach's instructions.)

Swimmers will be taught drills to improve strokes and will work on endurance through out the season.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parent Involvement

We are often looking for Parent Volunteers. Your help makes things run smoother and makes events great successes. Please plan on volunteering at one swim meet. The following are areas we may also need help with.

Social Activities

If you like to plan parties, please join us in this fun volunteering experience. We will be having pot lucks and many other events for you to help with to celebrate swim team with the swimmers.

Swim Meets

Timers, clean-up helpers, runners, etc, etc, etc. It takes a lot of people to help the children get ready. Any helpers we can get, we will sure use.

Parent Expectations

Communicate to coaches about:

- Meet attendance.
- Illnesses and injuries of swimmers.
- Concerns. These need to be addressed at appropriate times in appropriate manners. Respect all coaches decisions about the events children are entered in during meets. Swimmers are expected to swim in events coaches decide. At times, swimmers may need to swim extra events, other than those entered to help the team due to unforeseen circumstances.
- Respect other parents and swimmers.
- Pay all dues on time.
- Encourage all swimmers at meets and practice.
- Encourage swimmers to practice on own time.

SWIM TEAM PRACTICES

Practice Days and Times

Swimmers must have paid swim team fees each month to attend practices and swim meets. Swimmers can practice at any Bellingham, Lynden and Sudden Valley sites.

During High School swim season High School swimmers must continue to pay their youth membership in order to participate in the State and Regional Meets.

In order to participate in the State Meet each swimmer must have represented his/her YMCA in three closed YMCA meets after the last State Meet of each calendar year.

90 Day Rule: Each swimmer must have been a YMCA member in good standing for a period of 90 days prior to the State and Regional Meets.

Parents will be notified for weekend, holiday, or other interruptions to the normal practice schedule. Conflicts may arise due to unforeseen circumstances such as construction, maintenance, or pool issues. No refunds will be issued because of cancelled practices.

Call the YMCA if you are unsure if practice will be held.

Bellingham Program Center (360) 733-8630.

Lynden Program Center (360) 354-5000

What to Bring to Practice

Children will need to be **Responsible** during practice. They will need to bring the following with them to all practices:

- YMCA Membership Card to scan when you come to the YMCA.
- Goggles (an extra pair is always good too)
- Swim Cap
- Water Bottle
- Towel

We encourage the children to remember these and not to rely on their parents to bring the items to practice for them.

How to Act

Swimmers need to come ready to swim and listen to coaches. Swimmers need to be **Respectful** towards other swimmers, towards other members in the pool area and in the locker rooms. Lifeguards are here for your protection, so swimmers are also expected to **Respect** them.

Dry Land

Dry land exercises with the swimmers are done with direct supervision of the coaches to ensure the exercises are done properly and safe. Dry land exercises are done during regular practice times.

- Dry land exercises are done 1-2 times a week.
- Push-ups (on the wall or knees)
- Leg lifts
- Lunges
- Sit-ups

The goal of dry land training is to condition, stretch and strengthen muscles that are used in swimming while building fitness and athleticism. Dry land training is very similar to training for land based sports, however, the equipment and focus of training is slightly different. Dry land training for children should be modified for ability and age group. Dry land training will not only improve our swimmers ability but will also create more opportunities to meet new teammates, create relationships and reinforce teamwork.

FACILITY ACCESS AND REGISTRATION FEES

Building Access

Swimmers and parents going into YMCA buildings will need to bring their membership cards to practice with them. They will need to have the front desk scan their cards each time they are let through the doors.

Going Above and Beyond

Swim team participants are welcome to swim during lap swim times to practice and reinforce skills they learn in swim team. Look for a pool schedule on the information board outside the pool entrance.

YMCA Locker Room Etiquette

It is important to remember that the locker rooms are used by all members of the YMCA and it is VERY IMPORTANT that all swimmers be RESPECTFUL while using the YMCA facility. This means to self, each other, the facility, other members, and staff.

All swimmers should have shoes on when they are outside of the pool area. Swimmers should not be in hallways when dripping wet. Swimmers need to clean up after themselves in hallways and locker rooms.

Additional Fees

There may be additional fees for meets. We will notify you of any additional fees. There are also additional fees for swim suits, apparel and caps.

All swimmers will need to wear the Whatcom Family YMCA Dolphins swim cap during all meets. Caps can be purchased for at the front desk.

RULES AND EXPECTATIONS OF SWIMMERS

The coaching staff wants to set ground rules for practices to maintain a POSITIVE learning and practice environment. It is intended to help, not rule.

- Have equipment available and adjusted before every practice. Always have an extra set of goggles with you at every practice.
- Begin sequences of drills on time and finish by touching the wall (do NOT stand up before touching the wall).
- MAINTAIN proper spacing between swimmers as drills start. A good method to use is to wait until the person in front of you is at the flags before you start.
- All swimmers will listen and follow directions from coaches. All drills should be performed as instructed. If you do not understand how a drill is done, do not be afraid to ask for clarification.
- Please refrain from talking during drill instruction.
- Do not hang on the lane lines.
- Always display proper sportsmanship.
- Swimmers will treat others with respect and will not interfere with other swimmers as they are completing their workout.
- No horseplay during practice.
- **Swimmers will uphold the YMCA mission statement, philosophy, and character values.**
- If the coaches feel your child is not progressing past the minimum level of stroke development after a reasonable amount of time on swim team, the coaches may recommend OR require that your child take additional swim lessons for more one-on-one help.
- Maintain proper eating, sleeping and studying habits.
- Be a leader and HAVE FUN!
- Wear Whatcom Family YMCA Dolphins swim cap during meets.

Discipline Policy

To ensure the safety of all swimmers, the following progressive discipline steps will be taken for those swimmers who disregard pool/safety rules, and/or display disrespect for the coaches, teammates, and/or lifeguards:

1. Verbal warning to the swimmer.
2. Swimmer sits out for 5 – 10 minutes.
3. Swimmer will be asked to leave the activity or event for the day. Parents will be notified and an incident report will be filed.
4. If the behavior continues, parental attendance will be required at practice until the Aquatics Director deems the situation under control.
5. **If the situation does not improve, the swimmer will be asked not to participate for an extended period in team activities. This action will be communicated by the Aquatics Director to the parent and swimmer.**

SWIM MEETS

Meets

A swimmer is ready for their first meet as soon as they can swim the distance required and feel confident enough to compete. The sooner the swimmer begins to compete, the sooner they will see improving times. A meet is a great teaching media and everyone is encouraged to participate and improve their skills in preparation for the next meet.

The Whatcom Family YMCA is part of the Puget Sound Swimming Association (PSSA). Their website is www.psswim.org.

The fall meet schedule will be posted on this website as well as on the team website and on the information board in the pool area.

There is generally an average of two swim meets per month during the fall/winter season (September thru March).

Sign up sheets will be posted on the information board in the pool area for each meet.

The Washington State YMCA Swim meet is held the last Saturday in January.

The Pacific Northwest Regional Swim Meet is held the first weekend in March.

If a swimmer has signed up for a meet and an unexpected illness or emergency arises and he/she no longer is able to attend the swim meet, please notify a coach ASAP.

What to Bring

Children will need to bring the following to Meets:

- Goggles (2 pairs in case one breaks)
- Towels (more than one is good)
- Healthy Snacks
- Water Bottles
- Swim Cap
- Extra Clothes

Parent should bring the following:

- Folding Chairs
- Dress appropriately – remember indoor pools are hot during the winter season. Layers are best.
- Camera if you desire!

Warm-ups

It is strongly recommended that all swimmers warm-up at swim meets. Warm-ups give swimmers the chance to not only loosen and warm-up their bodies, it also gives them the opportunity to get familiar with a “new” pool. It is important to practice starts off the blocks, practice turns, and count from the flags if doing backstroke. Not all pools are the same, so we highly recommend:

- ALL swimmers arrive early for warm-ups.
- All swimmers must warm up at our assigned team time.
- Please arrive at meet sites at least 15 minutes prior to warm-ups to get settled in and begin stretching.
- Prior to the beginning of each meet, swimmers are to check in with the Coach.

General Meet Information

Meets can take anywhere from 3 hours to 5 hours (or longer), depending on the number of swimmers present and how efficiently the meet is run. The home sponsor of each meet sets the schedule for their meet, so starting times will vary.

- It is the responsibility of each swimmer to be at the clerk of course at the proper times.
- It is also important to have warm clothing to wear between events. Temperatures vary and waiting areas often times will be cool.
- Bring at least 2 towels. Use one during the meet and save the other so you will have a dry one AFTER the meet.
- Bring nourishing snacks for your swimmer to eat at the meet. Most pools usually have a concession stand as well. Some snack suggestions include fruit, cookies, granola bars, sweet cereals, candy bars, and sports drinks or water.
- It is expected that swimmers engage in restful activities or cheer on their teammates between events.

Individual Events

Swimmers may generally swim in three individual events. Events are usually separated by age group and gender. The age group for the swimmer is determined by the age of the swimmer on the day of the meet.

The following age groups are used in most competitions:

- 8 and under
- 9 & 10
- 11 & 12
- 13 & 14
- 14 to 21

The events included in each meet are varying distances of the four competitive strokes: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle, as well as the individual medley, which is a combination of these four strokes.

Relays

Relays consist of 4 swimmers. Competitive relay events include Medley relays and freestyle relays. Swimmers may usually swim in two relays. Relays will be determined by the Coaches at the swim meet. Relays will be based on individual times, attendance at practice, and swimmers' attitude.

Meet Transportation

Parents are responsible for driving their swimmer to and from meets. Carpooling is encouraged, **but not facilitated by the YMCA. Coaches are not permitted to be involved in transportation due to YMCA insurance limitations.**

COMMUNICATION

How to Contact Us

Bellingham Program Center: (360) 733-8630

Lynden Program Center: (360) 354-5000

Website: www.whatcomymca.org

Head Coach/Team Coordinator (All Sites): David Millican
dmillican@whatcomymca.org (360) 305-2537

Email List

We have an email list! This is a great way to mass communicate.

PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

- I will encourage good sportsmanship by demonstrating positive support for all swimmers, coaches, and officials at every meet, practice, or other events.
- I will place the emotional and physical well-being of my child ahead of a personal desire to win.
- I will support the implementation of the YMCA's four character development values, caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.
- I will support coaches and officials working with my child, in order to encourage a positive and enjoyable experience for all.
- I will demand a sports environment for my child that is free from drugs, tobacco, and alcohol, and will refrain from their use at all YMCA youth sports events.
- I will remember that the swim team is for youth - not for adults and the respect all coaches.
- I will not interrupt or interfere with coaches or officials while they are coaching on the deck at practices or swim meets and wait until meet or practice is over to ask questions.
- Unless volunteering at a swim meet I will just be a spectator watching and cheering on my child from the bleachers or deck chairs. I am not allow to be on the deck or behind the blocks during a meet or swim practices.
- I will do the very best to make the swim team experience fun for my child.
- I will help my child enjoy the swim team experience by doing whatever I can, such as being a respectful fan.
- I will read and agree to the swim team parent handbook.
- I will understand that the Whatcom Family YMCA has many sites in Whatcom County which supports the Dolphins Swim Team as one team.
- I will respect and support all coaches on the Dolphin Swim and understand there are several coaches on the team to support and coach my swimmers progress.
- I will teach my child to treat other players, coaches, fans, officials with respect regardless of race, sex, creed, or ability. I hereby pledge to provide positive support, care, and encouragement for my child participating in swim team by following this Parents' Code of Conduct.

SWIM TEAM CODE OF CONDUCT

As a responsible athlete of the Whatcom Family YMCA Dolphins Swim Team, I agree to conform to the following Code of Conduct at all times while representing the Dolphins Swim Team and the Whatcom Family YMCA:

At Practice / Meets I will:

- Be on time for practice and warm-ups.
- Bring goggles, cap, towel, and water bottle to all practices and meets.
- Respect all lifeguards, coaches, swimmers, officials, and visitors while representing our team.
- Ask questions when I am not sure of coaches instructions.
- Assist other team members when they are lost or confused.
- Cheer for teammates during races.
- Offer congratulations to my opponents win or lose.
- Be humble in victory and honest in defeat.
- Strive to do my best, and encourage all team members to do the same.
- Encourage YMCA core values caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.
- Abide by the Whatcom Family YMCA Code of Conduct

At Practice / Meets I will NOT:

- Cause physical harm or threaten physical harm to a fellow team member, coach, or parent.
- Possess, use or be under the influence of alcoholic beverages, chemical, or illegal drugs.
- Behave in a manner that in the opinion of the coaches or team representative is contrary to normally accepted behavior.

All coaches and assisting staff will follow the agreed upon discipline pattern:

- 1 verbal warning
- 5 to 10 minute timeout.
- Removal from event, with parental follow up from coach

I understand that violation of these guidelines may cause dismissal from practice, meets, and/ or the team, at my parent's expense.

I understand that the values contained in this Code of Conduct, remains in effect for as long as I am a member of the Whatcom Family YMCA Dolphins Swim Team.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Nutrition

Proper nutrition is essential for first-rate athletic performance. In general, you should try to keep your child on a balanced diet, difficult as it may be, and to cut down on junk food. Use whatever vitamin supplements that have been recommended by your doctor. In most cases, being on a balanced diet will provide all the vitamins and minerals that your child will need.

You will find that your child's appetite will grow in proportion to the amount of time they put into training. You are likely to find that your child will have fewer cold and flu and, in general, will be healthier throughout the entire year, even in the deep, dark winter. Remember, the healthiest people in the world are the Scandinavians, who at 85, still go out and jump in the ice floe every morning, so don't worry your child to death (or illness!)

"Swimmer's ear" is a common and very painful experience, which can be normally be avoided by making sure the ears are DRY after practicing and showering.

The incidence of cramps can be kept to a minimum by giving your swimmer fresh fruit, especially bananas. Bringing a bottle of water to practice is essential.

Now a word about processed sugar - NO! That's the best word we can think of. Processed sugars not only cause tooth decay, they impede a swimmer's performance both at practices and swim meets! When you first eat something that contains a great deal of processed sugar, especially first thing in the morning, ie: sugary breakfast foods, candy, soft drinks, etc., the blood sugar quickly rises to a very high level then plunges and stays there. This can cause dizziness, weakness, general irritability and inability to concentrate. You can well imagine what kind of performance a child will be capable of under these circumstances. Instead of giving your child candy and soft drinks at meets, try fruit, raisins or granola.

The night before a meet should be handled as if it were a regular school night. Put your child to bed at about the same time you would on a school night. The evening meal doesn't have to be anything special, just some favorite dish. Breakfast the morning of the meet, should be on the light side, but do not send your swimmer away from the table hungry. The meal should be high in starches - yes starches - and extremely low in processed sugars.

Be a Good Example

Children learn from parents, sometimes whether we want them to or not. You have probably heard a disgruntled parent say something like, "I don't know where that kids learned to be so irresponsible. She never finishes anything she starts." Very often these attitudes were taught to the child by their parents through the parents' own poor example. Take care to teach your child responsibility by getting them to practices and swim meets on time—even when it's tough. And on those cold, dark days when sitting in front of the TV is much more appealing than going to practice, nudge your child down the road to self-discipline by explaining the necessity of finishing what one begins while you are helping them into their swim suits.

As mentioned earlier, when you allow your child to join the Dolphin's, you take on some responsibility, too. We all must dedicate some of our time and talent to the team. Even though it might be tough to spare the time, set a good example and plan to work in some capacity. Don't make the same people do all the work all the time.

If you would really like to contribute to the maintenance of a strong team, donate some of your time and ideas as a Committee Chairperson. We need and encourage everyone's participation.

Our use of the pool is a privilege extended to us by the Whatcom Family YMCA, so please remind your child to treat the facility with respect.

Be Understanding of Your Child's Progress

There is a trap that many parents fall into. It works like this: a swimmer receives coaching/training for the first time and many defects begin to be corrected. Naturally the swimmer will show great amounts of improvement the first and second year of competition. This is great as long as it is kept in perspective, because, sooner or later, every swimmer will level off and the normal process of working for every tenth of a second will begin. The problem, or trap, is that many parents fix their expectations based on these early performances so that when their swimmer does level off, they think that something has gone wrong. They may accuse their children of slacking off in practice, not trying, or even worse, of not being able to do it.

Instead of decreasing the anxiety that their swimmer already feels at slowing down, and helping them to understand the reality of their situation, the parents actually increase the anxiety by pressuring their children to perform.

Always find something to praise your child for! Children are subjected to many negative influences today that tend to make them feel that they are less than others. Let them know that they are unique the way they are and that they are doing a fine job, in a great sport!

Without fun, your child may not want to keep swimming. Swimmers of all ages rank "fun" as the number one reason they swim. Olympians with years of experience say that they will continue with the sport as long as they are having fun! Children don't have fun standing around at practice. They don't have fun when they feel pressure to win. They have fun in well organized, skill oriented practices. They have fun competing and striving to win while developing their skills. Fun for kids is not just fun and games. Fun encompasses learning, competing, training and being with their friends. Remember, your child won't be able to control all of the factors that go into winning a race. They have no control over their competitors! But they will find success and fun in developing and improving skills. This is one of the most satisfying aspects of sports. The most important question you can ask following practice or a meet is "did you have fun today?"

Be Understanding of The Coach

Good swimming organizations do not grow on trees. A good coach is a virtual compendium of organization, knowledge, dedication, and caring. And even though they may need money to be able to continue in coaching, money is obviously not the main reason that they coach. They coach from a sense of doing something worthwhile. They like kids and they feel swimming is a super sport in which to be involved. In this day and age, good coaches are certainly strange animals. If you have any of these unusual creatures coaching your team, here are some brief hints on their care and feeding.

First of all, it is important that you not only trust your coach's ability and judgment, but that you exhibit that trust and support in front of your children. Don't sit around the dinner table tearing them down. We all make mistakes from time to time. If your swimmer keeps hearing what a rotten coach they have, they'll start believing it. If you feel your swimmer is not receiving all that they could in practice, or that they're having some sort of difficulty that is not being resolved, talk to the coach privately about it. Chances are the problem is simply a matter of different perceptions.

Finally, take the time every once in a while to show your coaches that they are appreciated. They respond to kindness just like puppy dogs. And when your coach is having one of those "what am I doing standing out here" days, your attention could make all the difference.

Success

This final chapter has been reserved for a discussion of the expectations and goals that you, as a parent, have for your children in a swimming program. In other words, what criteria will you use to judge your child's involvement—either failure or success?

The criterion most often used is very simply, how much a swimmer wins. There is, of course, validity to this criterion, considering the competitive society in which we live. In fact, a certain amount of success is necessary for maximum motivation of a swimmer. This is the reason for the PSSA, USA and National competition. But remember, success is relative. It's easy to get caught up in the competitive aspect of swimming, sometimes winning becomes too important. To parents as well as children. Don't think of the outcome of a meet in terms of winners and losers. Everyone who competes is a winner! A far more important factor in evaluating success is the quality of the swimmer's effort, and the more objective reality of a "personal best" time.

There remains one final criterion which is valid for judging your child's involvement in competitive swimming, especially during the inevitable "dry spells" that all swimmers go through for one reason or another. Consider--- for a monthly sum, your child, instead of sitting home glued to the TV or out roaming around looking for something to do, is enjoying a constructive program that not only fills much of their spare time, but is also exceptionally healthy, both physically and emotionally. In the face of this, "winning" becomes far less important, and your child's swimming career will definitely be a SUCCESS!

Notes: