

PVS Club Officials Chair

Roles, Duties, and Obligations

Who can be the Club Officials Chair

Ordinarily, the Club Officials Chairperson (COC) is a certified official. But, that is not a requirement. The only real requirement for the position is that the person filling the role must be willing to perform all of the necessary tasks of the position. The title “Coordinator” is perhaps a better description of the role, as much of what this person does is to coordinate a variety of activities.

Communications

The biggest key to being an effective COC is effective communications. Communications between yourself, the officials on your club, the potential officials on your club, and with the other clubs in PVS are of paramount importance. By working together, we can minimize the work that any one individual has to do, while maximizing our ability to provide “fair and equitable standards of competition” for the athletes.

Role in the Recruitment of New Officials

A major role of the COC is the recruitment of new volunteers to officiate. While we are fortunate that many officials are active for a significant number of years, and some are active even when they no longer have a child swimming, we are also faced with the fact that many of our officials are only active for two or three years. Thus, to have a sufficient number of officials to run a meet, we must continually attract new volunteers.

While some individuals will actively seek a role in officiating, it is likely that there are many more that are willing to volunteer, but they don't know where to start. Others don't volunteer because they don't know that there is a need. This is where the COC plays a key role in the recruitment process. The COC needs to advertise the need, by word of mouth, club newsletters, flyers, etc. Although a variety of recruiting information is available on the PVS (www.pvswim.org) and USA Swimming (www.usaswimming.org) websites, it has been found that recruitment efforts by one-on-one contact are the most successful.

Providing people with information allows them to make informed choices. Many individuals do not want to help with officiating because, for the most visible positions (Stroke and Turn Judge and Starter), they do not realize they can serve as trainees over an extended period of time and develop their proficiency during multiple training opportunities. Few people understand that a whole group of officials (Timing System Operator, Timing Judge, and Hy-Tek Computer Operator) are involved in determining and recording the official time of each swim. These positions require a variety of skills and are particularly well suited to individuals with a knack for computers or numbers.

It should also be stressed that providing enough officials for a swim meet is the responsibility of all clubs, big and small. There are very few clubs in Potomac Valley that have the ability to run a meet on their own, and even they appreciate the help of additional volunteers. It is only by acting collectively and in cooperation with each other that most clubs can successfully run a meet and give the swimmers the level of officiating that they deserve. It is important to remember that a handful of small clubs with one or two officials working together can add up to five to ten officials, a number that will make a difference.

Officials Clinic Help

Throughout the year clinics are scheduled to train new volunteers with the greatest number being held at the beginning of the season. These clinics are run by members of the PVS Officials Committee. The current list of scheduled clinics is posted on the PVS website (www.pvswim.org/official/officialsclinics.html). As COC you can request that an instructor come to your training site to hold a clinic at a time convenient for your club.

If a clinic is scheduled at your location, you will need to arrange for the location and set up of the facility/room. Other clinics might be offered in conjunction with a swim meet, and is located in a meeting room at the swim venue. While clinics can potentially be done anywhere and at anytime, they should always be advertised to allow volunteers from all clubs to attend.

Most clinics will target a particular function—Stroke & Turn Judge or Starter, for example. A large clinic or swimposium might target many or all of the officiating positions offering different simultaneous sessions.

Beyond the Clinic - Getting Trainees Certified

Believe it or not, only about one half of the individuals that attend a training clinic will actually become a certified official. Some individuals decide that officiating is not for them, and never begin their on-deck training. Other individuals may start their on-deck training, but not work the required number of sessions to complete the process. In many cases, simple encouragement and a continuing explanation of the process is all it takes to keep these individuals involved. This is particularly true when it comes to scheduling training sessions at a meet (see below). The mentoring role is often the key to the certification process working adequately for an individual trainee and leading to consistent officiating throughout PVS.

Officials Roster Updates

An Officials Roster is maintained on the Officials section of the PVS website and is updated approximately every month. The Officials Roster is available sorted by name or by club, but basically lists all PVS officials and their certifications.

The Officials Roster serves several purposes. First, it lists the COC for each club - the point of contact when other clubs are looking for meet officials. Second, if you are charged with staffing a meet and running short of officials at a particular position, you can easily tell who the certified officials are for that position from the invited clubs. Third, it provides a reminder of when an official's certification will expire so you can remind them that they need to recertify.

It should be evident that maintaining an accurate Officials Roster is an important activity. The accuracy of this list is a shared responsibility of the COC, the Certification Officer and the Officials Registrar, Sumie Emory (register@pvswim.org). The Officials Roster is currently maintained by the Certification Officer Rita Page (jonali2000@msn.com). Corrections to contact information (which is not currently available on the publicly accessible list) can come directly from the COC or individual officials. Updates to email addresses are especially appreciated, as these seem to change on a frequent basis. PVS and the Certification Officer maintain these addresses in order to distribute the newsletter and other important official's information.

At a minimum, the accuracy of the Officials Roster should be checked at both the beginning of the short course and the long course seasons. Please download the roster from the PVS website, check it for accuracy, and let the Officials Registrar and the Certification Officer know of any additions/deletions or changes in certification status that you think need to be made.

Meet Officials Recruitment

In theory, staffing a meet should be a relatively straightforward process; in practice staffing a meet tends to be a time consuming and slow process. Recruitment of officials for a meet is most often done by the host club's COC, Meet Director, Meet Referee, or some other designee. If you are asked to staff a meet, it is very important that this be done in coordination with the Meet Referee. The Meet Referee will be able to tell you of specific needs for the meet, as well as how trainees will be managed.

Anywhere from two to four weeks prior to the meet, the hosting club will begin looking for officials to cover the meet, from within their club, as well as participating clubs. This is done by contacting the COC of the participating clubs (www.pvswim.org/clubchr.htm) and letting them know of the officiating needs of the meet. Providing the COC with a copy of the meet invitation, or at least a schedule of which age groups swim when, will help potential volunteer officials determine which sessions they will be attending. This process is most readily accomplished by email, and thus the importance of up-to-date contact information becomes apparent.

The COC should then contact their club officials to determine if and when they can work the meet. It is important not to put this off until the last minute, or even worse, not be done at all. The sooner you can get this information distributed the better. The reality is that many people will not make a commitment until the week before the meet. If, however, you know ten days before the meet that six officials will be available and you're unsure of the status of two other officials, communicate what you know sooner rather than later.

It is important for the COC to contact any trainees to both encourage them to work, and to find out when they wish to work. This information should also be sent to the host club, as it will help to ensure that the trainee can actually train at the meet. Because training is done one-on-one, it is generally easy for walk-on Stroke & Turn Judge trainees to work a session, but a walk-on Referee, Starter, Hy-Tek or Timing System Operator trainees may find that there is already another trainee signed-up for the session. By knowing who is coming, how far along each individual is in their training, and the staffing levels at a given meet, the Meet Referee can work with the host COC to maximize the training opportunities available.

Based on feedback obtained, the host team COC in conjunction with the Meet Referee should schedule the officials and trainees for each session of the meet. This includes Referees, Starters, S&T Judges, Timing System Operator, Timing Judge, Hy-Tek Operator, and Marshals. Any holes in the roster (such as no Timing Judge for session one, no CTS operator for session two, or only two S&T Judges for session four) are problems that should be dealt with before the meet. This may mean emails or phone calls to specific individuals. This can be made easier by obtaining a list of the swimmers entered in the meet and comparing it to the officials roster for the clubs attending the meet to identify the necessary volunteers. Ideally, the roster of scheduled officials should be sent to all the clubs attending the meet (and better yet, to all the individuals who have volunteered to work the meet). In the rare event that too many individuals volunteer to work or train at a particular position, it is important that those that are not needed be contacted prior to the meet. This is particularly true for those individuals without swimmers that are making a special effort to attend the meet. Please remember that both certified officials and trainees are volunteers, and that we should treat them as such!

Post-Meet Reporting

For the past several years, PVS had been tracking the staffing of all the meets in PVS territory. This is done by the Officials Committee through the Officials Tracking Program (www.pvswim.org/official/tracking.html). Although the Meet Director is responsible for reporting this information, it may be delegated to the Meet Referee or the COC. Although PVS is paying the club a rebate of \$20 for reporting this information, the real benefit is in getting the officials credit for the sessions they worked.

USA Swimming/PVS Non-Athlete Registration

All Referees, Starters, Stroke & Turn Judges, and Meet Directors are required by USA Swimming rule to be non-athlete members of USA Swimming. Registration is on a calendar year basis, although registrations received at the beginning of the short course season run through the next calendar year. Potomac Valley Swimming pays the USA Swimming registration for returning, certified officials that are actively working meets in PVS (hence the importance of the post-meet reporting described above). Different clubs deal with the first-year registration in different manners. Some clubs pay for the first-year registration of their certified officials (and in some cases their trainees), while other clubs do not. Whatever the process used by an individual club, it is important that the COC make sure that those officials requiring registration are in fact registered, as they cannot be on deck if they are not currently registered non-athlete members. The COC should also track their officials to make sure they are re-registered every year.

PVS and USA Swimming do not require the non-deck officials (Marshal, Timing System Operator, Timing Judge, and Hy-Tek Operator) to register as non-athletes. These officials may register if they wish. Marshals do not require and prior training so this position – crucial to the controlled management of the deck – is ideal for some parents who want to help directly, including on short notice. The non-deck officials also do not have to follow the specific uniform requirements as the on-deck officials.

Re-Certification Process

PVS Certifications are good for two years from the end of the year in which certification was attained. Recertification requires attending a clinic and completion of the USA Swimming on-line re-certification test for that position. Re-certification also requires that the official worked a minimum number of sessions during that two year period. More information about the certification/re-certification requirements can be found on the PVS website at (www.pvswim.org/official/cert.html).

Nametags

Nametags are available for a minimal fee of \$3.00 for all officials that have completed the certification process. If you have individuals that should have nametags and have not received them, please let your the Certification Officer know. Replacement tags are also available as needed.

Dissemination of Information

From time to time the Chair of the PVS Officials Committee may have information that needs to be disseminated to officials of your club. This information may be sent to you and should be forwarded in a timely fashion.

Officials Committee and Website

The PVS Officials Committee (www.pvswim.org/official/officials_committee.html) is ready to help the COC perform the functions of recruitment, training and retention. Contact any member of the committee for assistance at any time.

The Officials section of the PVS website (www.pvswim.org/official/index.html) has resources that can help the COC in performing their job. It also includes a link to the Officials section of the USA Swimming website that has additional resources.

End of Tenure

If you are leaving your club, or stepping down as the COC, please try to help find a replacement before you are gone. At a minimum, try to make sure that someone in a responsible position is actively looking for a replacement. Please notify the PVS Administrator (pvadmn@pvswim.org) and the Certification Officer (jonali2000@msn.com) of this change.

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