

## The PVS Club Officials Chair

### REQUIREMENTS

The PVS Club Officials Chair's (COC) primary responsibilities are recruiting and mentoring officials, and staffing club-hosted meets (in conjunction with the Meet Referee). Anyone willing to assume the responsibilities of the role is qualified to be the COC, however, the COC is usually a certified official.

A new COC is recruited by the current COC in conjunction with club management. Please report any change in COC to the PVS [Officials Chair](#).

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 PVS COCs 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.

### RECRUITING & RETAINING OFFICIALS

#### Recruiting Officials

A major role of the COC is recruiting new volunteers to officiate. PVS is fortunate to have an experienced base of officials, but many of our officials are only active for a few years. Each year brings an increased workload for our officials – more meets and more swimmers at each meet. In order to provide the best experience for athletes and volunteers alike, we must continually attract new volunteers.

Each PVS club with more than 25 swimmers is expected to have certified officials affiliated with it. PVS has established the following minimums for its member clubs:

Number of Swimmers	Minimum Number of Certified Officials
1-25	No Requirement
26-50	1
51-75	2
76-100	3
>100	an additional official for each additional 30 swimmers (or portion of 30)

For example, a club with 372 swimmers is required to have 13 certified officials. Only officials with current PVS certifications and USA Swimming registration are counted towards the minimum number of required officials. The count of officials is made on May 1<sup>st</sup>. The club is financially penalized for each official it is short of the minimum number.

While some individuals will actively seek a role in officiating, it is likely that there are many more who are willing to volunteer but don't know where to start. Others don't volunteer because they don't know that there is a need. The COC advertises the need for new officials - by word of mouth, club newsletters, email, beginning of year parent meetings, flyers, etc. Coaches may be able to help identify potential volunteers. The most successful recruiting approach is usually one-on-one contact. A variety of recruiting information is available on the [USA Swimming](#) website.

Some individuals are reluctant to officiate because they are unaware of the training resources provided by PVS. PVS has developed a curriculum and program to educate new officials as well as current officials who want to broaden their skill set. The program includes working with an experienced official as an apprentice over an extended period of time to develop proficiency. Some are reluctant to officiate because they don't want to disqualify swimmers. They may not be aware that a whole group of officials is involved in determining and recording the official time of each swim, positions that are well-suited to individuals with a knack for computers or numbers.

## **Retaining Officials**

While turnover is expected, the COC can be proactive in retaining officials once they have completed initial certification. The PVS Officials Chair can provide the COC information about expiring certifications and USA Swimming registration requirements. It's good practice to review this information at the beginning of a new season to encourage officials to attend clinics, work additional sessions, and renew APT and Background Check as needed.

## **MENTORING OFFICIALS**

The COC is a key mentor to the club's officials. Mentoring starts with leading by example, i.e., volunteering not only at meets your club hosts but also at meets in which your club participates, working at all positions at which you are certified not just the "highest" level at which you are certified.

### **The Certification Process**

Stay in touch with apprentices as they progress through the certification process. Historically, only about one half of the individuals that attend a training clinic will actually become a certified official. Some decide that officiating is not for them, and never begin their on-deck training. Others may start their on-deck training, but not work the required number of sessions to complete the process. In many cases, simple encouragement, personal contact, 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 apprentice sessions at a meet (see below).

### **Additional Certifications**

After an official has been certified at an entry-level position for a year or more, encourage officials to expand their capabilities by certifying at additional positions. With additional certifications, officials not only become more valuable when staffing a meet, but they become more engaged in officiating.

### **Recognition**

Everyone enjoys being recognized for their efforts! There are a variety of officials' recognition programs in place across PVS clubs – some involve financial considerations while others are "stuff-based" – shirts, cups, key chains, jackets, bags, etc. Often a simple "Thank You" is enough, be it private, i.e., via email, or public, i.e., at an end of season banquet. Officials are a critical part of every swimmer's experience – work with your club to show appreciation for their efforts.

## MEET STAFFING

Providing officials for a swim meet is the responsibility of all clubs, big and small. There are very few clubs in PVS 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.

### Recruiting Officials for a Meet

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. Recruiting officials for a meet is most often done by the host club's COC or Meet Referee. If you are asked to staff a meet, it is critical that you coordinate with the Meet Referee. The Meet Referee determines any specific needs for the meet, as well as how apprentices will be managed.

Recruiting begins two to four weeks prior to the meet. Encourage your club's officials to support the club by volunteering to officiate at not only meets your club hosts, but also meets in which your club participates. If you are responsible for staffing a meet, email the COCs of the participating [clubs](#), provide them with officiating needs of the meet and a copy of the meet announcement (if available).

If you receive a request from a COC, promptly forward it on to your club's officials, including apprentice officials, and be sure to include contact information for the person staffing the meet. The sooner this information is distributed the better, however, many people will not make a commitment until the week before the meet. Encourage your officials, including apprentices, to contact the host COC ahead of time. This is particularly important for apprentices at Referee, Starter, Administrative Official, Hy-Tek Operator, and Timing System Operator as there is usually only one apprentice position available for these positions. 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.

USA Swimming has established minimum official requirements for all swim meets or time trials (except dual meets), "officials other than the Referee and the Administrative Official may act in more than one officiating capacity" (excerpted from the 2015 USA Swimming Rulebook):

1 Referee	1 Clerk of Course (if applicable)
1 Administrative Official	Relay Take-off Judges (if applicable)
1 Starter	1 Announcer
2 Stroke Judges and 2 Turn Judges or 2 Stroke & Turn Judges	3 Timers/lane (one if automatic timing equipment with touchpads is used)
1 Place Judge	Marshal(s) (number determined by PVS)
Timing Equipment Operators (as needed)	

A common example of an official acting in more than one officiating capacity is a single official acting as Announcer, Starter, and Place Judge.

Working with the Meet Referee, the host team's COC schedules the officials and apprentices for each session of the meet. This includes Deck Referees, Starters, Chief Judges, S&T Judges, Administrative Official, Timing System Operator, and Hy-Tek Operator. Any holes in the roster (such as no Administrative Official for session one, no Timing System Operator for session two, or only two S&T Judges for session four) are problems that should be addressed before the meet. This may mean emails or phone calls to specific individuals. The roster of scheduled officials should be sent to all officials who have volunteered to work the meet and the COCs of the clubs attending the meet.

### Post-Meet Reporting

PVS uses USA Swimming's [Officials Tracking System](#) (OTS) to record officials' sessions worked. As COC, you may be designated by the Meet Referee to enter this information for meets hosted by your club. Detailed [instructions](#) for using OTS are available on the PVS website. Timely entries are important – both PVS and officials rely on the information in OTS for certification and advancement.

## RESOURCES

### PVS Officials Clinics

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 instructed by experienced PVS Officials. The list of scheduled [clinics](#) is available on the PVS website. If you would like to schedule a clinic for your club and/or location, contact the appropriate member of the [PVS Officials Committee](#). You will be asked to arrange for the location and set up of the facility/room.

### PVS Officials Roster

An [Officials Roster](#) is maintained on the PVS website and is updated approximately every month. The Officials Roster is available sorted by name or by club, and lists all PVS officials and their certifications. Only officials who have a current USA Swimming Registration and current certification are included on this list.

### PVS Officials email List

All PVS officials are encouraged to join the [PVS Officials email List](#). The list is self-subscribing and is used by the PVS Officials Committee to distribute news and information and by those staffing meets to solicit requests for officials.

### USA Swimming Non-Athlete Registration

All PVS officials must be non-athlete members of USA Swimming. Registration is on a calendar year basis; registrations received at the beginning of the short course season run through the following calendar year. PVS pays the USA Swimming registration fee for returning, certified officials that worked a minimum of 10 sessions at PVS-sanctioned, non-Officials Qualifying Meets (OQMs) in the previous calendar year. Returning officials will receive an email from the PVS Officials Chair with instructions to complete USA Swimming non-athlete registration. Many PVS clubs will pay the first year registration fee for new officials, and some pay the registration fee for officials who do not meet the requirements for PVS to pay their registration fee. These policies are set by the individual clubs; as COC you must understand your club's policy.

In addition to the registration form and registration fee, USA Swimming non-athlete registration requires [Athlete Protection Training](#) (APT) and a [Background Check](#). Both APT and the background check remain valid for two years and must be renewed. There is no cost associated with APT, initial or renewal. PVS [reimburses](#) officials for the cost of their background check, initial or renewal, for officials (including apprentices) who work at least 6 sessions (including apprentice) in the 12 month period beginning 6 months prior to the date of background screening and extending to 6 months after the date of screening are eligible for reimbursement.

### Re-Certification Process

PVS Certifications are good for two or three years from the end of the year in which certification was attained, depending on the position. Recertification requires ongoing experience (a minimum number of sessions worked), clinic attendance, and, for most positions, completion of the USA Swimming on-line re-certification test for that position. Detailed information about the [certification](#) and [re-certification](#) requirements for each position is available on the PVS website.

### Links

The [PVS Officials Committee](#) is available to assist the COC. Contact any member of the committee for assistance at any time

[PVS Club Officials Chairs](#) includes contact information for each of the PVS Clubs' Officials Chairs

The [Officials](#) section of the PVS website has a wide range of resources that can assist the COC

The [Officials](#) section of the USA Swimming website

## GLOSSARY

PVS – Potomac Valley Swimming

PVS Official – a USA Swimming official certified by PVS on behalf of USA Swimming as trained for a position