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FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

ELKINS-RANDOLPH COUNTY YMCA RAYS 2026-2027 SEASON HANDBOOK

Welcome to the Elkins-Randolph County YMCA swim team, the RAYS. The RAYS is a fun but competitive swim team that offers children and teens the opportunity to improve their swimming and endurance skills and live a healthy lifestyle. The program is based on the YMCA's core values of honesty, respect, responsibility, and caring. Please read through this handbook in full for up-to-date information.

PLEASE REVIEW THE HANDBOOK IN DETAIL. HERE ARE SOME KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:

The fall season starts Monday, September 21st.

Swimmers must be officially registered with all program fees paid to participate in practices and meets. Registrations can be completed online at www.elkinsymca.com or in person at the YMCA.

There are three opportunities to register: 1) Register for the full season through October 16th. 2) Register for the fall season by November 1st to start swimming November 2nd. 3) Register by December 1st for "last chance" registration to start swimming on December 1st. Registrations closes after December 1st and no swimmers will be added to the roster past this date.

Coaches will assign practice groups. Due to limited lane space, we are unable to accommodate special practice requests.

Once meet entries have been submitted, you must pay for your entry regardless of whether your swimmer attends the meet.

Spectators, including parents, are not permitted on the pool deck.

Cell phones are not permitted at practices.

Please be supportive and respectful to all swimmers, coaches, officials, and Y staff at all times!

REQUIREMENTS TO PARTICIPATE:

- As per YMCA of the USA Competitive Swimming & Diving requirements, all RAYS swimmers must be members of the Elkins-Randolph County YMCA to participate.
- Swimmers must be 9 years of age and able to swim 25 yards across a pool unassisted to register for Silver or Gold competitive groups. Swimmers younger than 9 may participate with coach approval.
- Swimmers must be registered to participate in practices or meets.
- Any outstanding balances from previous seasons must be paid in full for swimmers to register in the current season.

Contents

ABOUT THE ELKINS-RANDOLPH COUNTY YMCA.....	3
ABOUT THE YMCA COMPETITIVE SWIMMING AND DIVING PROGRAM	3
REQUIREMENTS TO PARTICIPATE.....	3
ENROLLMENT OPTIONS, FEES, AND DATES	3
RAYS PRACTICE GROUPS & FEES.....	4
REGISTRATION	5
YMCA MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENT	5
SWIM MEET PARTICIPATION	5
CHAMPIONSHIP MEET REQUIREMENTS.....	5
COMMUNICATION.....	6
PARENT VOLUNTEERS	6
CHILD SAFETY POLICIES	7
SPECTATOR POLICY.....	7
CELL PHONE POLICY DURING PRACTICES	7
SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS	7
TRAVEL	8
LOCKER ROOMS AND CHANGING AREAS	8
PHYSICAL CONTACT	9
USE OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND VISUAL/AUDIO RECORDINGS.....	9
CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SWIMMERS AND PARENTS.....	9
CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COACHES	10
ZERO TOLERANCE FOR BULLYING POLICY.....	10
REPORTING ISSUES/GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES.....	11

ABOUT THE ELKINS-RANDOLPH COUNTY YMCA

The Elkins YMCA is a non-profit organization founded in 1903. It is supported solely by individuals who choose to join the Y and participate in the many programs and activities we offer. A portion of our support comes from the generosity of individuals and businesses who choose to make contributions to our cause.

The RAYS swim program was founded by a local parent group and joined the YMCA in 2009 to compete in regional YMCA-sanctioned events.

Over the years, the team has achieved a winning record with swimmers advancing to national meets. We are very proud of our swimmers' accomplishments, but our main goal for the program is to encourage area youth to participate in a team sport and to benefit from physical activity over the winter months.

ABOUT THE YMCA COMPETITIVE SWIMMING AND DIVING PROGRAM

The RAYS participates in the YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving program through the YMCA of the USA. The program is guided by the National YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving Advisory Committee and is managed by local YMCA programs like the RAYS.

All YMCA competitive sports, including swimming, must comply with the Rules that Govern YMCA Competitive Sports, available on www.ymcaswimminganddiving.org. Additional rules apply to the YMCA National Championship meets and the recognition of YMCA National Records and YMCA Top 10 status. These rules are established by the National YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving Advisory Committee, (National Advisory Committee). These rules may change from time to time.

The National Championship Meet Handbook, YMCA National Record Rules, and YMCA Top 10 Rules are posted on the YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving website www.ymcaswimminganddiving.org.

The RAYS team is governed by the Southeast Ohio, West Virginia Swim League (SEOWV). The participating teams in the league compete in YMCA dual meets, Invitational, SEOWV League Championships, Great Lakes Zone Championships, and YMCA National Championships. The league website is www.seowvswim.org.

REQUIREMENTS TO PARTICIPATE

- As per YMCA of the USA Competitive Swimming & Diving requirements, all RAYS swimmers must be members of the Elkins-Randolph County YMCA to participate.
- Swimmers must be 9 years of age and able to swim 25 yards across a pool unassisted. Swimmers younger than 9 may participate with coach approval.
- Swimmers must be registered to participate in practices or meets.
- Any outstanding balances must be paid in full for swimmers to register for the season or to participate in meets.

ENROLLMENT OPTIONS, FEES, AND DATES

Swimmers must be registered to practice with the team. There are three main practice groups based on experience and ability (see the attached chart). Within the practice groups, there are some options for parents to choose the practice location and number of weekly practices.

Since we have limited pool access, the practice group schedule is set up to accommodate as many swimmers as possible. Unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate special schedule requests beyond the published schedule.

2025-26 RAYS PRACTICE GROUPS & FEES

Group	Practices	Location	Eligibility	Meets	Dates	Registration Options		
						Full Season	November Start	Last Chance December Start
Bronze	2x/week at YMCA: T/Th 6-6:45 pm (Register in 5 Week Sessions)	YMCA	Ages 5 to 12. Swim 25 yards unassisted No prev. experience required Intro. to basic strokes	No		\$80 (Open to Members and Non-Members) per Session First Sessions runs September 22 – October 22; Additional Sessions TBA		
Silver	2x/week choice of: - YMCA T/Th 5-6 pm - WVWC T/Th 6:30-7:30pm	YMCA/ WVWC	9 years of age, or with coach approval Swim 25 yards Prev. swim team experience Freestyle & backstroke	Yes	9/21/25 - 2/26/26	\$220.00 + Y Membership	\$175.00 + Y Membership	\$140.00 + Y Membership
Gold	3x/week choice of: D&E: M/T/Th/F 7-8 pm YMCA: W 7-8:30 pm WVWC: M/T/Th 6:30-8 pm	D&E/ YMCA/ WVWC	9 years of age, or with coach approval Swim 25 yards Prev. swim team experience 3 of 4 strokes	Yes	9/21/25 - 2/26/26	\$320.00 + Y Membership	\$250.00 + Y Membership	\$200.00 + Y Membership
	4x/week choice of: D&E: M/T/Th/F 7-8 pm YMCA: W 7-8:30 pm WVWC: M/T/Th 6:30-8 pm	D&E/ YMCA/ WVWC	9 years of age, or with coach approval Swim 25 yards Prev. swim team exp. 3 of 4 strokes	Yes	9/21/25 - 2/26/26	\$385.00 + Y Membership	\$300.00 + Y Membership	\$240.00 + Y Membership
Championship Season (March 9 th through meet date)						\$55 + YMCA membership		

Please note: Practice times at D&E College and West Virginia Wesleyan College are subject to the agreements set forth in advance by both schools. Participation in the RAYS does not extend privileges during public swim times at these sites where the colleges may require membership or day fees.

REGISTRATION

After reviewing the handbook, complete your registration online at www.elkinsymca.com, drop by the YMCA and sign up in person, or download and email us a registration form.

There are three opportunities to register during the season:

- 1) Register for the full season through October 16th
- 2) Register for "November Start" registration by November 1st to swim November 2nd through February 26th
- 3) Or register for "last chance" registration by December 1st to swim December 1st through February 28th.

**** Registration will close after December 1st and no swimmers will be added to the roster after this date.**

The total fees are due at registration when paying online. To make scheduled payments, please visit the YMCA to register at the front desk or download a registration form from our site and email it to info@elkinsymca.com.

YMCA MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENT

The Rules That Govern YMCA Competitive Sports require all swim team participants to maintain an active YMCA membership. A copy of these rules can be found at https://www.teamunify.com/yusa/UserFiles/Image/QuickUpload/rulesthatgovernfinal-92021_057325.pdf

Memberships are available for \$12/month for youths 13 and under and \$22/month for teens 14-18. There is a \$25 joiner fee for any membership that has lapsed more than 30 days. Your YMCA membership is continuous year-round. Parents must notify the YMCA if they wish to place their membership on hold or cancel for the off-season; otherwise, membership dues will continue automatically.

SWIM MEET PARTICIPATION

Participation in meets is optional but encouraged. Only Silver and Gold swimmers are eligible to participate.

The meet coordinator will work with coaches to develop the meet schedule for the season. The meet schedule and information packets will be posted on the team's website.

A couple of weeks before an event, the meet coordinator will send out a message asking for entries. All entries will be processed through the team's site on SwimTopia. The coaches will have the final decision on any entries.

Please be aware that meet entry fees are non-refundable. Once entries have been submitted, you must pay for your entry regardless of whether your swimmer attends the meet. Meet fees will be automatically scheduled for payment using the payment method provided at registration.

Due to the cost of travel, a RAYS coach will be sent to regular season meets when six or more swimmers register for an event. When a coach is not able to attend, we will arrange for a coach from another team to represent our swimmers on deck. Coaches will attend championship meets regardless of the number of registered swimmers, when scheduling allows.

CHAMPIONSHIP MEET REQUIREMENTS

Swimmers who qualify based on meet times are eligible to compete in the YMCA's championship meets in March. Participation in these meets extends the practice season for participating swimmers and additional fees apply.

The coaches will determine meet entries. Relays will be comprised of the four fastest swimmers eligible for that meet, based on times achieved from meets 30 days prior.

The national YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving program has additional requirements for competing in championship meets:

- A swimmer must be a full privilege, annual member of the YMCA they represent.
- A swimmer's age for the entire season shall be determined as of December 1st for the winter season and swimmers shall swim in their own age group for all individual events.
- A swimmer must have represented only their YMCA in any open competition during the current season. (Note: A swimmer may compete in open competition unattached but may not represent any team other than their local YMCA.)
- YMCA Black Book rules apply to swimmers. Specific rules exist for swimmers changing teams during the season.
- Before the entry deadline for Championships, all swimmers shall have represented their association in three (3) YMCA meets during the winter season for winter Championships and shall have been a YMCA member in good standing who holds an annual, full privilege membership. The three meets MUST be a minimum of one (1) inter-association dual meet and two (2) other YMCA dual meets or YMCA closed invitational. For a meet to count, the participating teams must meet the minimum dual meet requirements. Attendance at a meet canceled due to weather will be counted as participating in a meet. Participation in one individual event constitutes participation in a meet.
- One of the three participation meets for Winter Championships must be at least 40 days before the start of the Championship meet.

COMMUNICATION

Team information is available on the team website <https://rays.swimtopia.com/>. You will receive communication about the team primarily through messages from this site. Please sign up to be added to the mailing list.

The team also has a parent page on Facebook called 'The RAYS Swim Team'.

- Questions about practices: Contact the coach at your practice site (see SwimTopia for contact information).
- Questions about meets: Contact Eric Anger, volunteer meet coordinator, at 304-516-1754 or coachanger@elkinsymca.com.
- Questions about billing: E-mail info@elkinsymca.com or call the Y at 304-636-4515.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Parents play an important role in making the RAYS a success. The team is supported by parent volunteers who support YMCA staff in the operation of the program.

Parents can work together to promote the program to the community and attract new swimmers, assist with fundraising efforts, and coordinate meet entries and volunteers for meets.

All programs operated in the YMCA name or out of YMCA or partner facilities are under the supervision of YMCA staff. Policy decisions affecting the program are approved by the YMCA CEO with consideration given to the input and suggestions of the coaches and parents.

- Parent Committee: One parent at each site helps to coordinate fundraisers and enhance communication and team spirit within and across the different sites.
- Meet Management/Volunteers Committee: Creates the meet schedule and coordinates entries. Recruits parent volunteers to assist at meets and to pursue meet official accreditation.

CHILD SAFETY POLICIES

SPECTATOR POLICY

The pool deck is closed to all spectators, including parents. If you need to speak to a coach, please schedule a mutually convenient time through Swimtopia to meet before or after practice. All meetings must take place over the phone or at the Y.

CELL PHONE POLICY DURING PRACTICES

Swimmers are not permitted to bring or use cell phones during practices or in locker rooms. Coaches are not permitted to use cell phones during practices except for official RAYS business.

ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTIONS

One-on-one interactions between a minor athlete, coach, or team representative (who is not the minor's parent or legal guardian) must occur at an observable and interruptible distance from another adult unless under emergency circumstances.

Meetings between a minor athlete and a coach or team representative may only occur if another adult is present and where interactions can be easily observed and at an interruptible distance from another adult, except under medical emergency circumstances.

If a one-on-one meeting takes place, the door to the room must remain unlocked and open. If available, it must occur in a room that has windows, with the windows, blinds, and/or curtains remaining open during the meeting.

Meetings may not be conducted in an athlete or coach's hotel room or other overnight lodging location during team travel.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

All electronic communication (including social media) from a coach or team representative to participating families in the RAYS must be professional in nature. Coaches or team representatives should communicate information about practices, meets, etc. directly to an athlete's parent or legal guardian.

Absent emergency circumstances, if a coach or team representative needs to communicate directly with a minor athlete, the minor athlete's parent or legal guardian must be copied. If a minor athlete communicates to a coach or team representative privately first, the coach or team representative must copy the minor athlete's parent or legal guardian on any electronic communication response to the minor athlete.

Requests to Discontinue

Parents or legal guardians may request in writing that their minor athlete not be contacted through any form of electronic communication. The organization must abide by any such request that the minor athlete not be contacted via electronic communication, or included in any social media post, absent emergency circumstances.

Hours

Electronic communications must only be sent between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. unless emergency circumstances exist or during competition travel.

Prohibited Electronic Communication

Coaches and team representatives are not permitted to maintain private social media connections with minor athletes associated with the team and are not permitted to accept new personal page requests on social media platforms from minor athletes. Existing social media connections with minor athletes must be discontinued. Minor athletes may “friend” official team pages.

Coaches or team representatives must not send private, instant, or direct messages to a minor athlete through social media platforms.

TRAVEL

Local Travel consists of travel to training, practice, and competition that occurs locally and does not include coordinated overnight stay(s). Team Travel is travel to a competition or other team activity that the team plans.

Coaches or team representatives must not ride in a vehicle alone with an unrelated minor athlete, absent emergency circumstances, and must always have at least two minor athletes or another adult in the vehicle unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the minor athlete’s parent or legal guardian.

When a minor athlete travels alone to a competition, the minor athlete’s parent or legal guardian must complete a transportation waiver consent and provide it to their coach in advance, and for each competition, for the minor athlete to travel with another adult who is not their parent or legal guardian.

Unrelated coaches or team representatives must not share a hotel room, other sleeping arrangements, or overnight lodging location with a minor athlete.

Minor athletes should be paired to share hotel rooms or other sleeping arrangements with other minor athletes of the same gender and of a similar age.

Meetings during team travel must be conducted consistent with the one-on-one interactions section of this policy (i.e., any such meeting must be observable and interruptible). Meetings must not be conducted in an individual’s hotel room or other overnight sleeping location.

LOCKER ROOMS AND CHANGING AREAS

The designated locker room or changing area must be used when an athlete changes, in whole or in part, into or out of a swimsuit when wearing just one suit (e.g., deck changing is prohibited).

At no time are coaches or adults permitted to be in a locker room with minor athletes, except under emergency circumstances, or if a parent or legal guardian of the same sex is assisting a young athlete. The parent or legal guardian should notify a coach or team administrator before entering the locker room.

The use of any device’s (including a cell phone’s) recording capabilities, including voice recording, still cameras, and video cameras in locker rooms, changing areas, or similar spaces by a minor athlete, coaches, team representatives, or any adult is prohibited.

Monitoring

Coaches must regularly and randomly monitor the use of locker rooms and changing areas to ensure compliance with this policy. Locker rooms and changing areas may be monitored by use of the following methods:

- Conducting a sweep of the locker room or changing area before athletes arrive.
- Posting staff directly outside the locker room or changing area during periods of use.
- Leaving the doors open when adequate privacy is still possible; and/or
- Making occasional sweeps of the locker rooms or changing areas with women checking on female locker rooms and men checking on male locker rooms.

Every effort must be made to recognize when a minor athlete goes to the locker room or changing area during practice and competition, and if the minor athlete does not return in a timely fashion, to check on the minor athlete's whereabouts.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Coaches, team representatives, and adults who are not related to the athlete are not permitted to provide any type of massage, rubdown, or any physical modality, like assisted stretching.

USE OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND VISUAL/AUDIO RECORDINGS

Parents/guardians will be asked to complete a photo/video/audio release at the beginning of the season. The intention of the release is to provide the YMCA and our training site partners with the permission to use photographs of the team to recognize team achievements and to promote the team within the community. Parents have a right to refuse agreement to their child being photographed.

All photograph or recordings must observe generally accepted standards for youth sports:

- Action shots should be a celebration of the sporting activity
- Action shots should not be taken or retained where the photograph reveals a torn or displaced swimsuit.
- Photographs should not be taken from behind swimming blocks at the start of a race or exhibit a child climbing out of the swimming pool.
- Photographs should not be taken in locker rooms or bathrooms.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SWIMMERS AND PARENTS

The YMCA is committed to providing a safe, caring, and friendly environment for all our members.

Swimmers, parents, and coaches represent the Elkins/Randolph County YMCA at practice sites and meets and are expected to follow the team's code of conduct during these times.

1. Display proper respect and sportsmanship toward coaches, officials, administrators, fellow competitors, parents, and the public in attendance at practices, meets, or team functions.
2. Respect the property at all practice sites and any other facility the team visits or uses. Parents and swimmers are responsible for any intentional damage caused to a site or facility.
3. Promote positive team spirit and morale. Be supportive of other team members' successes. Never interfere with the progress of another swimmer at any time.
4. Be respectful and follow the directions of the coaching staff during practice, meets, and other team activities.
5. Swimmers must stay in the practice area during the entire practice. Swimmers may not leave the supervision of the coaching staff without their direct approval.
6. Parents must stay in the spectator stands and are not permitted on the pool deck.
7. Swimmers should arrive prepared and on time to practice and meets with all necessary equipment. Appropriate attire (warm-up gear) must be worn to and from practices and meets. Swimmers may not arrive or leave dressed in just a bathing suit.
8. Swimmers are not permitted to use cell phones during practices or in the locker rooms.
9. It is the swimmer's responsibility to familiarize themselves with and abide by pool safety rules applicable to the facility where a practice or swim event is being held. These safety rules include but are not limited to the following:

- a) No running on deck or in the locker rooms.
 - b) No diving except where permitted and in the manner permitted.
 - c) No unruly or disruptive behavior, such as pushing, shoving, yelling on deck or in the locker rooms.
 - d) No towel snapping or hitting.
 - e) No fighting or roughhousing.
10. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Any athlete who feels that they have been bullied is encouraged to talk to their parents and/or a coach who will address the situation.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COACHES

1. At all times, adhere to the team's policies and guidelines.
2. Set a good example of respect and sportsmanship for participants and fans to follow.
3. Respect officials and their judgment and abide by the rules of the event.
4. Treat opposing coaches, participants, and spectators with respect.
5. Instruct participants in sportsmanship and demand that they display good sportsmanship.
6. Coach in a positive manner and do not use derogatory comments or abusive language.
7. Win with humility and lose with dignity.
8. Treat every athlete fairly, justly, impartially, intelligently, and with sensitivity.
9. Always place the well-being, health, and safety of swimmers above all other considerations, including developing performance.
10. Always maintain a professional separation between coach and athlete.

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR BULLYING POLICY

The RAYS is committed to providing a safe, caring, and friendly environment for all our swimmers and families and has zero tolerance for bullying. If bullying does occur, all athletes and parents should know that incidents will be dealt with promptly.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

- Physical bullying: when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
- Verbal bullying: when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
- Nonverbal or relational bullying: when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip.
- Hazing: an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person's willingness to participate.

Bullying creates a hostile environment and infringes on the rights of the victim to freely participate on the team.

Reporting Procedures

An athlete who feels that he or she has been bullied is asked to do one or more of the following things:

- Talk to their parents;
- Talk to their coach or write a letter or email;
- Make a report to the YMCA executive director

There is no express time limit for initiating a complaint under this procedure, but every effort should be made to bring the complaint to the attention of the coaches as soon as possible to make sure that memories are fresh, and behavior can be accurately recalled, and the bullying behavior can be stopped as soon as possible.

How We Handle Bullying

If bullying is occurring during team-related activity and is witnessed by a coach, we will STOP THE BULLYING BEHAVIOUR ON THE SPOT.

If bullying is occurring within our team and is reported to a coach, we will address the bullying by:

- Finding out what happened,
- Determining whether it's bullying or an isolated incident,
- Supporting and coaching the kids involved to resolve the situation, and
- Identifying, labeling, and addressing the problem behavior.

REPORTING ISSUES/GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Grievance procedures provide swimmers, parents, coaches, and employees with a system to address and report grievances in a productive, systematic way. Following these procedures provides the appropriate parties with a means to properly investigate, intervene, and take disciplinary action when needed.

FOR ISSUES REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF A SWIMMER OR PARENT – REPORT THE ISSUE TO THE HEAD COACH

Any swimmer or parent who violates the code of conduct will be subject to the following disciplinary measures:

First Occurrence: The incident will be documented on an incident report explaining the behavior and the steps taken by the coach(es) on the day of the occurrence. A copy of the incident report will be provided to parents.

Second Occurrence: The incident will be documented on an incident report explaining the behavior and the steps taken by the coach(es) on the day of the occurrence. Depending on the severity of the incident, the swimmer and/or parent may be dismissed from the practice or event immediately. A meeting with the coaching staff and YMCA executive director will be required to occur before the swimmer or parent can return to team practices and events. During this meeting, the final disciplinary action (in the event of a third occurrence) will be determined, agreed to, and documented.

Third Occurrence: For incidents involving a swimmer, the athlete will be removed from the team. The swimmer will not be able to participate or register for the team again for a minimum of one year and would require approval by the coaching staff.

For incidents involving a parent, the third occurrence of an incident will result in the parent not being permitted to be on the premises during practices or meets.

Parents will be provided with written notification from the YMCA executive director detailing the disciplinary action taken.

Appeals to any decision made by YMCA staff can be made in writing to the Y executive director within 48 hours. Parents have the right to request to have an appeal heard on an emergency basis in time-sensitive situations.

The coaching staff will not be permitted to participate in or preside over any processes which represent direct personal conflicts of interest in any way.

During practice sessions and meets, the coaches' primary responsibility is to train and coach the swimmer, not act as a disciplinarian, or directly supervise interactions or conversations between swimmers or parents.

The YMCA reserves the right to end enrollment of a swimmer to ensure a safe and positive environment for all participants of the RAYS.

REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF A COACH – NOTIFY THE HEAD COACH OR YMCA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Should a parent or swimmer feel a coach's conduct is inappropriate or violates any team policies or procedures, the parent/swimmer should notify the head coach or YMCA executive director of this violation. This complaint should be made in person or writing.

The appropriate individuals will contact the person who filed the grievance, and the person against whom the grievance is being filed, to ask questions about what happened. In addition, other witnesses may be contacted for more information.

The behavior of the person(s) against which the grievance was brought, will be assessed using club policies and facility rules, as well as applicable local and state laws.

Disciplinary action will be taken, if appropriate using the following general guidelines:

- Nature of the misconduct
- Severity of the misconduct
- Prior disciplinary actions
- Adverse effects of the misconduct
- Application of the Code of Conduct

FOR ISSUES DEALING WITH KNOWN OR SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE – REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT: When you suspect abuse or neglect you should report your concerns to the Department of Health and Human Resources at 1-800-352-6513 7-days a week, 24 hours a day.