

## **Welcome to the Hammerhead Swim Club!**

A Message for Parents & Families:

The Hammerhead Swim Club (HSC) strives to make our swim program both a FUN and learning experience. To ensure a positive experience for all swimmers and families, parent participation and accountability is essential to the success of the HSC organization. General club information and expectations have been developed and are contained in the Hammerhead Swim Club Handbook. This handbook was developed by our board, coaches and parents and is the product of many swim club experiences. New swimmers and their parents/family members are encouraged to read the information contained in this handbook; returning HSC members should periodically review the information contained in this handbook.

While we hope that this handbook will be a valuable reference to swimmers and their families, we also realize that involvement in the program may seem initially overwhelming. We strongly encourage new families to seek out board members or other experienced swimmers and their family members if there is specific information, questions, or concerns that are not addressed in this handbook. Signing up for the many volunteer opportunities is a great way to become familiar with and become an integral part of the HSC organization.

General questions, concerns or suggestions about the HSC program should be directed to a board member. A current list of Board Members will be given out at the beginning of the swim season.

If at anytime you have concerns about your child's swimming performance, please contact head coach Matt Pawlick, or your child's coach.

Thank you,

HSC Board and Coaches

# Hammerhead Swim Club Handbook

## Table of Contents

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Parent Responsibilities &amp; Expectations</b>	1
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Communication</b>	2
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Coaching Philosophy</b>	2
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Practice</b>	3
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Rules and Discipline Policy</b>	4
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Swim Meets</b>	4
7.1	What to Bring to a Meet	6
7.2	Dual Meets	6
7.3	Invitational Meets	6
7.4	Home Meets	7
7.5	Away Meets	8
<b>8.0</b>	<b>HSC Events &amp; Fundraisers</b>	8
8.1	Banquet	8
8.2	Fundraisers	9

## Appendices

Appendix A	Ten Commandments for Parents of Children Involved in Athletics
Appendix B	Pool & Locker Room Rules
Appendix C	Typical Meet Event List
Appendix D	MTSL State Meet Qualifying Times
Appendix E	Meet Volunteer Opportunities

# Hammerhead Swim Club Handbook

## 1.0 Introduction

The Hammerhead Swim Club (HSC) offers a competitive swimming program for varied skill levels and ages. The mission of the HSC is to provide a program to improve competitive swimming skills, build self-esteem, and encourage good sportsmanship, individual integrity and teamwork. The HSC's experienced coaches provide a positive, safe, and nurturing environment that fosters development and achievement of competitive goals and cooperation among swimmers and parents/families.

The regular swim season runs from approximately October 1<sup>st</sup> to the beginning of March; age-group coaching by ability and skill level through flexible practice schedules is available 3-4 days per week, and 2 days per week for new swimmers aged 10 and under. Swim fees are based upon the number of practices per week and are paid at the beginning of the season. Payment options are available; please refer to information provided at the beginning of each swim season.

## 2.0 Parent Responsibilities & Expectations

To have a successful program there must be understanding and cooperation among parents, swimmers, and coaches. The progress your swimmer makes depends largely on this triangular relationship. It is with this in mind that we ask you to consider this section as you join or return to the Hammerhead Swim Club.

As a parent you are naturally a significant part of your child's upbringing. Your child is a product of your values, the structure you have provided, and the model you have been. Human nature, however, is such that a parent loses some of his/her ability to remain detached and objective in matters concerning their children's athletics. The following guidelines will help you keep your child's development in the proper perspective and help your child reach his/her full potential as an athlete.

The greatest contribution you can make to your swimmer's progress is to be a loving, supportive parent. Appendix A of this handbook is a reprint of an article called, "The Ten Commandments for Parents of Athletic Children." It offers some very useful and sound advice on communicating with your swimmer.

Please make every effort to have your swimmers at practice on time. Realize that your child is working hard and give him/her all the support you can. Encourage good diet and sleeping habits as they will serve your child(ren) well.

A significant portion of the HSC operating budget relies upon fundraising in order to keep swim season dues at a reasonable level. Hosting meets, running concessions and soliciting donations are some of the ways we raise money for the club. **One of the commitments you made when you joined the HSC is to help work at our home swim meets.** Section 6.0 of this handbook provides

additional details on swim meets. **Each HSC swimmer/family is also expected to participate in other fundraising activities as outlined in the Section 7.2 of this handbook**

### **3.0 Communication**

The primary means of communication for important items and upcoming dates, including meet entry deadlines, will occur via e-mail and posted on our website, hammerheadsc.com. Please be sure the coach has the parent/family email and not just the swimmer's e-mail.

Each family has a file folder located at the pool labeled with the family's last name. Meet awards (ribbons and medals) specific to a swimmer/family are placed in the family folders. Also, once in a while families may get an email letting you know a flyer etc. was placed in your folder. Please check or see that your swimmer checks this folder regularly.

The HSC also uses a bulletin board located just inside the pool entrance and maintains a club website for the purpose of communicating general information. Each of these sources should have duplicate information. Parent volunteers do their best to ensure that the information communicated via email, bulletin boards and the website is consistent and accurate; however, it is still the swimmer/family's responsibility to check their e-mail, team website/bulletin board, and family folder on a regular basis.

### **4.0 Coaching Philosophy**

The coach's job is to motivate and constructively criticize the swimmer's performance. It is the parent's job to supply the love, recognition, and encouragement necessary to make the child work harder in practice, which in turn gives him/her the confidence to perform well in competition. We want your swimmer to communicate with his or her coach as soon as possible concerning swimming matters. A positive relationship between coaches and swimmers produces the best results. When parents interfere with opinions as to how the swimmer should swim or train, it causes considerable, and oftentimes insurmountable, confusion as to which person the swimmer should listen (coach or parent). If you have a problem, concern, or complaint about coaching or your swimmer's performance, please contact the coach directly.

Swimmers age ten and under are the most inconsistent swimmers; this can be frustrating for parents, coaches, and the swimmer alike! Parents and coaches must be patient and permit these swimmers so that they learn to love the sport. When a young swimmer first joins the Hammerheads, there may be a brief period in which he/she appears to slow down. This is a result of the added concentration on stroke technique, but this will soon lead to much faster swims for the individual.

Even the very best swimmer will have meets where they do not swim their best times. These "plateaus" are a normal part of swimming. Over the course of a

season, times should improve. Please be supportive of your swimmer even if they experience "poor" meet performance. When contacting the coaches, please refrain from interrupting them while they are on the pool deck conducting a practice session. The best way to speak with the coaches is to send them an e-mail or call them directly to arrange a time to meet. Coaches are usually available after practice for about 10 minutes to answer questions, provide information, etc.

One of the traditional swim team communication gaps is that some parents seem to feel more comfortable in discussing their disagreements over coaching philosophy with other parents rather than taking them directly to the coach. Not only is the problem never resolved that way, but in fact this approach often creates new problems.

Listed below are some guidelines for a parent raising some issues with a Coach:

1. Try to keep foremost in your mind that you and the coach have the best interests of your child at heart. If you trust that the coach's goals match yours, even though his/her approach may be different, you are more likely to enjoy good rapport and a constructive dialogue.
2. Try to evaluate if your concern involves a matter that compromises the safety of your child or just a difference of opinion *before* confronting a coach. The ability of your child to learn to thrive in different environments and with a variety of diverse individuals – whether a teacher, coach, or other team member - is a valuable life skill that is fostered through athletics.
3. Keep in mind that the coach must balance your perspective of what is best for your child with the needs of the team or a training group that can range in size from 10-100 members. On occasion, an individual child's interest may need to be subordinate to the interests of the group, but in the long run the benefits of membership in the group compensate for occasional short-term inconvenience.
4. If your child swims for an assistant coach, always discuss the matter first with that coach, following the same guidelines and preconceptions noted above. If the assistant coach cannot satisfactorily resolve your concern, then ask that the head coach join the dialogue as a third party.
5. If another parent uses you as a sounding board for complaints about the coach's performance or policies, listen empathetically, but encourage the other parent to speak directly to the coach. The coach is the only one who can resolve the problem.

## **5.0 Practice**

In order for a swimmer to progress and improve his/her skills, regular participation in practice sessions is essential. Swimmers and/or parents (of younger or new swimmers) are encouraged to make sure that the swimmer is

ready to enter the water at the designated practice time. Arrival at the pool 10-15 minutes prior to practice is recommended.

Practice times are determined prior to the start of the swim season and may change during the season and/or from season to season. Swimmers/families may elect to practice 3 or 4 days per week, and 2 days per week for new swimmers aged 10 and under. Practice workouts are developed by the coaches and target various age ranges and/or abilities. Swim practice times balance the availability of the community pool and coaches, with the various schedules and needs of our swimmers. Practice times are broken out by age, and coaches work to accommodate various abilities within the age groups. In general, we do not allow swimmers to attend practices outside of their assigned age group bracket. Swim coaches may make suggestions to individual swimmers regarding what practice time, lane or workout is most effective for a swimmer; swimmers and families are strongly requested to respect these suggestions as they are for the benefit of the team as a whole.

## **6.0 Rules and Discipline Policy**

Swimmer safety and swim program quality are the top priorities of the HSC. With the large number of swimmers and varied age groups, excessive fooling around cannot only be disruptive but dangerous. The HSC Coaches have the responsibility for the safety of all swimmers. Coaches also have the authority during times when swimmers are in the pool, on the pool deck or in the locker rooms. The importance of correct and respectful behavior in the pool, on the pool deck, or in the locker rooms cannot be stressed enough.

A list of specific pool rules is provided in Appendix B; adherence to these rules is strictly enforced. In addition to these rules, if the action(s) of a swimmer, as determined by any of the HSC Coaches, is unsafe, disrespectful, unsportsmanlike-like, uncooperative, detrimental to the team, or potentially harmful in any way, the following actions will be taken:

- First Offense: A swimmer will be given a verbal warning for the first offense.
- Second Offense: If the behavior(s) continue then a written warning will be given to the swimmers and to the parents/family.
- Third Offense: At the discretion of the HSC Head Coach, the swimmer may be barred from attending further practices and/or meets.

## **7.0 Swim Meets**

Since the HSC is a competitive swim program, participation in swim meets is encouraged, yet voluntary. The experience of competing with other swimmers of similar age and ability is beneficial to improving individual performance and times. The HSC Coaches track and encourage “winners” though improvements in personal time and effort rather than stressing winning of medals, ribbons

and points. More importantly, most swimmers say that swim meets are a lot of fun.

Swim meets consist of both home and away meets and are typically held on Saturdays. The swim meet schedule is available on the website and the HSC bulletin board located inside the pool entrance. There are also some 2-3 day meets (for USA swimmers) and an occasional Sunday meet. Some families elect to only participate in home meets, some of the away meets, or any combination of both home and away meets.

The HSC swimmers can participate in either or both of two competitive leagues described below:

### **Michigan Team Swim League (MTSL)**

The HSC is a member of the Michigan Team Swim League, which is comprised of age-group swim clubs from around the state. The league is divided into northern and southern districts. Swim teams in the MTSL North League include Cadillac, Gaylord, HSC, Rudyard, and Sault Saint Marie. Teams from the MTSL host typically participate in dual, tri and invitational meets throughout the swim season as well as individual league (north) championship and an overall State Championship meet.

### **USA Swimming**

USA Swimming is a national age-group competitive swim league. This program runs concurrently with the normal MTSL meet schedule and offers additional competitive opportunities throughout the state. All swimmers must register with USA swimming regardless of intent to participate in away USA meets.

All meets require a considerable amount of preparation for the coaches. Swim meets all have an entry deadline to ensure that the computer system is set up ahead of time so that meets run efficiently. Meet signup deadlines will be posted on the team website and communicated via email. Entry deadlines are up to a month before for USA meets and a week before for MTSL meets.

### **7.1 What to Bring to a Meet**

In addition to a swimsuit, cap and goggles, it is also a good idea to bring extra towels and sweatpants/sweatshirts for your swimmers to wear between events. Often gym or cafeteria areas are cool while pool areas are hot so dressing in layers for spectators is also a good idea. Families are encouraged to bring blankets, folding chairs, as well as healthy food, snacks and drinks for their swimmers. There is usually a concession stand at meets, but often healthy food choices are limited. It should also be noted that the pool areas can be quite loud during swimming events.

### **7.2 Dual Meets**

A dual meet is a competition between two teams hosted by one of the teams. At these meets each team will score up to three swimmers per each event. Each event is separated by age group, gender, stroke and distance. A list of typical dual meet individual events and relays is provided in Appendix C. Individual swimmers are allowed to enter up to four events in various combinations (3 individual events and 1 relay; 2 individual events and 2 relays, or only 3 individual events and no relays). Team points are typically awarded for the top five places and ribbons are usually awarded for 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> places.

Dual meets typically last 3-4 hours. Directions to other pools are available on the team website on the team bulletin boards. Most MTSL away meets are within 1-2 hours. Parents are responsible to get their swimmers to each meet.

Although not technically considered a dual meet, often there are 3-4 teams attending a meet. While events are the same when more than two teams attend, scoring is slightly different.

### **7.3 Invitational Meets**

An Invitational swim meet is a competition between 5 or more teams. At these meets maximum individual entries and events types are at the discretion of the host team. At invitational meets there are typically entry fees for each event; these entry fees are paid by the parent/family of the swimmer prior to the invitational meet. Depending upon the meet, small trophies, medals or ribbons may be awarded through 12<sup>th</sup> place. Due to the size of these meets, team entries are often due several weeks before the meet date. Therefore, it is necessary to let the coach know if you wish to participate in an invitational meet by the posted deadline.

An invitational meet can last 4-8 hours depending up the number of teams and swimmers. Some invitational meets are arranged by age groups, i.e., age 12 & under swimmers in the morning and age 13 & over swimmers in the afternoon while other invitational meets run all age groups together beginning at 7-8 am and extending throughout the day. Because of the length of these meets and the number of participants, there is often not enough space for all families to stay in the pool area for the entire meet. An adjacent gym or cafeteria area is usually provided for



families to “hang out” when their child/children are not swimming. In this area there is typically a “marshaling” table that posts upcoming events for swimmers and families.

#### **7.4 Home Meets**

Each swim season, the HSC hosts a dual meet, one invitational meet, and often the MTSL North League Championship meet. These home meets also contribute to the HSC’s fundraising activities.

Home meets are run by parent volunteers and require significant preparation ahead of time. For home meets to be successful and operate smoothly, parent participation is essential. **Parents/families are expected to volunteer at the home meets.** Appendix D contains a list of jobs that need to be filled by parent/family volunteers at each meet. A time commitment of 4-8 hours, depending on the meet size and task assigned, is often necessary to fulfill many of the meet jobs. Volunteering for one or more of the meet jobs is a great way to meet other swimming families and get to know the swimmers. Please note that if specific meet jobs are not filled prior to the meet date the HSC volunteer meet coordinator contacts parents/families to solicit help.

##### Home Dual/Tri/Quad Meets

The Hammerheads usually host at least one dual, tri or quad meets on Saturdays during the swim season. These meets require the help of many team parents to set up the pool, run the meet, staff the concession area, etc. The time commitment for these home meets is approximately 4 hours. It is expected that that at least one parent/family member volunteer at each of these meets during the season.

##### Winter Blast Invitational

The Hammerheads host an invitational meet the third Saturday in January, called the *Winter Blast Invitational*. This meet is a major undertaking for the club and requires the help of all team parents to set up the pool, gym, and cafeteria areas the night before. In order for the meet to be successful, it is essential that parents (to the extent possible) volunteer their time for this day; this spreads the workload and allows volunteers to take breaks and, therefore, offers a more positive experience for both families and swimmers.

Swimmers from visiting teams begin arriving as early as 7:00 a.m. so it is necessary that many volunteers arrive by 7:00 a.m. or before. At the end of this meet, all parents and swimmers are needed to help clean and restore the areas used (pool deck, locker rooms, hallways, gym and cafeteria). It is recommended that parents/volunteers bring water and snacks and dress in shorts and tee shirts if you will be on the pool deck during the meet. We recognize that this is a long day for the parents and swimmers, but it is also an exciting and rewarding day.

### MTSL North League Championship

For the past several years the Hammerheads have hosted the MTSL North League Championship meet. The setup and orchestration of this meet is similar to the Winter Blast Invitational described above. This meet is usually the final home meet of the season. This is the final opportunity to qualify for the MTSL State Meet (see below) held on the following weekend so all swimmers that have not yet qualified are encouraged to participate<sup>1</sup>.

## **7.5 Away Meets**

Away meets are a welcome opportunity to just sit and watch your child/children swim. The duration of typical away meet is between 4 and 8 hours not including drive time. Meet warm-up times, start times and directions to other pools are posted on the HSC bulletin board and also are available on the team website.

### MTSL State Championship

The MTSL State Championship Meet typically takes place one of the last two weekends in February. Midland has hosted this event for the last several years at Saginaw Valley State University. Swimmers who have met the state qualifying times previously during the season are eligible to swim in this meet; the MTSL State Qualifying times are posted on the HSC bulletin board and available on the team website. Swimmers can swim up to three individual events (have met the qualifying time) in this meet. Relays are determined by the HSC Coaches. This meet is divided by age groups with the younger swimmers in the morning session and older swimmer on the afternoon session. A team pep rally is usually held in a nearby hotel the night before the meet.

## **8.0 HSC Events & Fundraisers**

### **8.1 Banquet**

Each swim season culminates with the Hammerhead Swim Banquet. The pot-luck style banquet is held in mid-March or early April, usually within one or two weeks after the MTSL State Championship Meet. The specific date of the banquet is subject to the availability of the HSC Coaches and a suitable facility. The date of the banquet and a dish to bring is communicated to the team by e-mail. This is a memorable evening for all.

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<sup>1</sup> A swimmer that has previously met a state qualifying time for a specific event cannot swim the same event in the North League Championship Meet.

## **8.2 Fundraisers**

The HSC is a non-profit organization registered under Section 501(c)(3) of the Federal Tax Code. The HSC operates on fees paid by swim program participants and on various fundraising events held throughout the year. The HSC conducts fundraisers in order to keep the season swim fees as affordable as possible for its families. Any new ideas or suggestions for fundraising opportunities are welcome and encouraged.

## **Appendix A**

### **Ten Commandments for Parents of Children Involved in Athletics**

1. Make sure your child knows that - win or lose, scared or heroic – you love him/her, appreciate his/her efforts and are not disappointed. This will allow your child to do his/her best without a fear of failure. Be the person that he/she can look to for positive reinforcement.
2. Try your best to be completely honest about your child's athletic ability, competitive attitude, sportsmanship, and current skill level.
3. Be helpful but do not coach him/her on the way to practice, to competitions, at meals and so on. It is tough not to, but it is a lot tougher for the child to be inundated with advice.
4. Teach him/her to enjoy the thrill of competition, to be out there trying, to be working to improve his/her skills and attitudes. Help him/her to develop a feel for competing, for trying hard, and for having fun.
5. Try not to relive your athletic life through your child in a way that creates pressure. You also lost as well as won. You were frightened, you backed off at times, and you were not always heroic. Do not pressure your child because of your pride. Athletic children need their parents so you must not withdraw. Just remember there is a thinking, feeling, sensitive, free spirit out there in the uniform who need a lot of understanding, especially when things do not go well. If he/she is comfortable with you – win or lose – he/she is on the way to maximum achievement and enjoyment.
6. Do not compete with the coach. If the coach becomes an authority figure it will run from enchantment to disenchantment with your athlete.
7. Do not compare the skill, courage, or attitudes of your child with other members of the team, at least within his/her hearing.
8. Get to know the coach so you can be assured that his/her philosophy, attitudes, ethics, and knowledge are such that you are happy to have your child under his/her leadership.
9. Always remember that children tend to exaggerate, both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before over-reacting.
10. Make a point of understanding courage and the fact that it is relative. Some of us can climb mountains and are afraid to fight. Some of us will fight but will turn to jelly if a bee approaches. Everyone is frightened in certain areas. Explain that courage is not the absence of fear but a means of doing something in spite of fear or discomfort.

*Reprinted from "The Young Athlete" by Bill Burgess*

**Appendix B**  
**Pool & Locker Room Rules**

1. The use of cell phones and/or cameras in the locker rooms is prohibited
2. No running, jumping, rough housing or similar behavior is allowed.
3. Glass containers are not allowed on the pool deck or in the locker rooms.
4. Swimmers shall not enter the water without the presence and permission of a Coach or on-duty lifeguard.
5. Swimmers and parents shall not enter the pool office without the specific permission from a Coach or pool staff member.
6. Shoes shall not be worn on the pool deck. (An exception to this is during swim meets for spectators.)
7. No diving in the shallow end of the pool.
8. Swimmers shall respect all pool and practice equipment, no sitting on or tugging lane lines, kickboards and fins will be used for intended purposes only.
9. Keeping personal items/clothing in the locker room lockers rather than the pool deck is strongly encouraged. Locks are also recommended; locks must be removed after practice as they cannot be left on lockers during the normal school day.
10. Swimmers are responsible for picking up any trash, wrappers, etc. used during practices or meets.

**Appendix C**  
**Typical Meet Event List**

<b>Girls Event Number</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Distance</b>	<b>Stroke</b>	<b>Boys Event Number</b>
<b>1</b>	8 & Under	100	Medley Relay	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	9-10	200	Medley Relay	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b>	11-12	200	Medley Relay	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b>	13 14	200	Medley Relay	<b>8</b>
<b>9</b>	15& Over	200	Medley Relay	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b>	9-10	200	Free	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b>	11-12	200	Free	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b>	13 -14	200	Free	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b>	15 & Over	200	Free	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b>	8 & Under	100	IM	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b>	9-10	100	IM	<b>22</b>
<b>23</b>	11-12	100	IM	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b>	13 14	200	IM	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b>	15 & Over	200	IM	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b>	8 & Under	25	Free	<b>30</b>
<b>31</b>	9-10	50	Free	<b>32</b>
<b>33</b>	11-12	50	Free	<b>34</b>
<b>35</b>	13-14	50	Free	<b>36</b>
<b>37</b>	15 & Over	50	Free	<b>38</b>
<b>39</b>	8 & Under	25	Fly	<b>40</b>
<b>41</b>	9-10	50	Fly	<b>42</b>
<b>43</b>	11-12	50	Fly	<b>44</b>
<b>45</b>	13-14	100	Fly	<b>46</b>
<b>47</b>	15 & Over	100	Fly	<b>48</b>
<b>49</b>	8 & Under	50	Free	<b>50</b>
<b>51</b>	9-10	100	Free	<b>52</b>
<b>53</b>	11-12	100	Free	<b>54</b>
<b>55</b>	13-14	100	Free	<b>56</b>
<b>57</b>	15 & Over	100	Free	<b>58</b>
<b>59</b>	13-14	500	Free	<b>60</b>
<b>61</b>	15 & Over	500	Free	<b>62</b>
<b>63</b>	8 & Under	25	Back	<b>64</b>
<b>65</b>	9-10	50	Back	<b>66</b>
<b>67</b>	11-12	50	Back	<b>68</b>
<b>69</b>	13-14	100	Back	<b>70</b>
<b>71</b>	15 & Over	100	Back	<b>72</b>
<b>73</b>	8 & Under	25	Breast	<b>74</b>

**Appendix C**  
**Typical Meet Event List**

<b>Girls Event Number</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Distance</b>	<b>Stroke</b>	<b>Boys Event Number</b>
<b>75</b>	9-10	50	Breast	<b>76</b>
<b>77</b>	11-12	50	Breast	<b>78</b>
<b>79</b>	13 -14	100	Breast	<b>80</b>
<b>81</b>	15 & Over	100	Breast	<b>82</b>
<b>83</b>	8 & Under	100	Free Relay	<b>84</b>
<b>85</b>	9-10	200	Free Relay	<b>86</b>
<b>87</b>	11-12	200	Free Relay	<b>88</b>
<b>89</b>	13-14	200	Free Relay	<b>90</b>
<b>91</b>	15 & Over	200	Free Relay	<b>92</b>

**Appendix E**  
**Meet Volunteer Opportunities**

Parent participation is expected and essential to the success of the HSC.

<b>Job Description</b>	<b>Typical Number Required</b>	<b>Job Description</b>	<b>Typical Number Required</b>
Pool Set up	6	Meet Coordinator/Manager	1
Pool Clean up	6	Admission / Swimmer Check-in	1-2
Marshalers	6-10	Timing System Operation	2
Timers	14	Computer System Operation	2
Officials**	4	Award Distribution	2
Starter	1	Announcers	1-2
Food or (\$) Donations for Concessions	Everyone	50/50 Raffle	2
Concession Sales	4	Locker Room Surveillance & Cleanup	2 Men 2 Women
Computer Setup*	1	National Anthem Singers	1-3
Heat Sheet/Program Preparation and sales	2		

\* Prior to the meet

\*\* Requires certification