

MWS Club Officials Chairpersons Roles, Duties, and Obligations

Who can be the Club Officials Chairperson—

Ordinarily, the Club Officials Chairperson (COC) is a certified official themselves. This is not a requirement; however, as the only real requirement for the position is that the person filling the role must be willing to perform all of the necessary tasks that are required 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, the other clubs in your area and throughout MWS, and with your Officials Committee Members (OCM) and Officials Chair are of paramount importance. By working together, we can all minimize the work that any one individual has to do, while maximizing our ability to provide “fair and equitable standards of competition” for all the athletes.

Role in the Recruitment of New Officials—

A major role of the COC is the recruitment of new volunteers to officiating. 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 also 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 has already been created and is available on the officials section of the USA Swimming website, it has generally been found that recruitment efforts that primarily rely on 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 they only recognize the most visible officials (Stroke & Turn Judge and Starter), and they know they don't want to get involved at that level. Few people understand that a whole group of officials (Timing System Operator, Timing Judge, and Recorder) 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. Volunteering as a Clerk of Course provides an opportunity to work with the younger swimmers, without having to worry about distinguishing a legal stroke from an illegal one, or worrying about having to disqualify the swimmers.

It should also be appreciated that providing enough officials for a swim meet is the responsibility of all clubs, big and small. There are very few clubs in this LSC 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 also important to remember that a handful of small clubs with one or two officials apiece can add up to five to ten officials, a number that will make a difference.

Officials Clinic Help—

Throughout the year, and most usually at the beginning of the short course season, officiating clinics are scheduled to train new volunteers. These clinics are run by the OCM and/or individuals approved by the OCM. Frequently, the OCM will make the arrangements (date, time, location) for conducting these clinics; in other cases, they may delegate this responsibility to one or more COCs.

If the clinic is scheduled in your location, you may be called upon to help in locating and setting up an appropriate facility/room. This can be as simple as a room at someone's home, a room at the pool facility, or a room at a local business, school, or church. Other times, the clinic 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.

Some clinics might target a particular function—Stroke & Turn Judge or Starter, for example, while others might target administrative positions. A large clinic with lots of help might target all of the officiating positions.

Beyond the Clinic—Getting Trainees Certified—

Believe it or not, only about one half of those 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. Many other individuals start their on-deck training, but do not work the required number of sessions. In many cases, simple encouragement and a continuing explanation of the process is all it takes to keep some of these individuals involved.

Officials Roster Updates—

An Officials Roster is maintained on the Officials section of the MWS website and is updated at the end of every month. The Officials Roster is available in a variety of formats, but basically list officials and their certifications by club with contact information (phone, address, and email address).

The Officials Roster serves at least three purposes. First, it lists the COC for each club--the point of contact when other clubs are looking for meet officials. Second, if one is staffing a meet and running short of officials at a particular position, one can easily tell who the certified officials are for that position from the invited clubs. Third, an accurate list lets us know if we have sufficient officials in the area. It should be evident then that maintaining an accurate Officials Roster is an important activity. The accuracy of this list is a shared responsibility of the COC and the Officials Chair. The Officials Roster is currently maintained by Scot Sorensen, MWS Officials Chair (ssorensen@neb.rr.com). Additions and deletions to the list, as well as updates to the certification status of individuals are only accepted from the Officials Chair. Corrections to contact information 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.

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 MWS website, check it for accuracy, and let your Officials Chair know of any additions/deletions or changes in certification status that you think need to be made. Corrected contact information may be sent directly to the Officials Chair.

Meet Official 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, although it may also be done by the 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, both within their own club, as well as from invited clubs. This is done by contacting the COC of the invited clubs 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 his/her club officials to determine if and when they can work the meet. It is very important to the process that this not be put off until the last minute, or even worse, not be done at all. The sooner you can get this information to the host club, the easier everyone's life will be, although 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 also important for the COC to contact any trainees to both encourage them to work, and to find out when they can 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 administrative trainee 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 that are available.

Based on feedback obtained, the 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, Clerk of Course, Timing System Operator, Timing Judge, Recorder, 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 listing 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!

USA Swimming/MWS Non-Athlete Registration—

All Referees, Starters, Stroke & Turn Judges, Marshals, 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. Different clubs deal with registration in different manners. Some clubs pay for the 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.

Re-Certification Process—

Certification is currently done on a calendar year basis, although officials meeting the recertification requirements can recertify for the next year being September 1 of the current year (effectively allowing for up to a 16 month certification period). The certification/re-certification requirements are available in the Officials section of the MWS Policy and Procedures located on the MWS website.

Nametags/Shirts—

Nametags and one officials shirt are available free of charge for all officials that have passed their initial certification. If you have individuals that should have nametags and have not received them, please let your Officials Chair know. Replacement tags are available for a nominal charge.

Dissemination of Information—

From time to time your OCM or the Officials Chair may have information that needs to be disseminated to officials on your club. This information should be forwarded in a timely fashion.

Interaction with the OCM—

An important role of the OCM is to support the COCs. If you need help or advice with an issue, or have a problem that you are having difficulty in resolving, please contact an OCM. Likewise, if there is an official on your club that you feel is particularly suited for advancement, this too should be communicated to the OCM.

End of Tenure—

If you are leaving your club, or stepping down as the COC, please try to 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.

Officials Committee Members (OCM)—

The current committee members are:

- Keith Eckerman eckerman1@cox.net
- Paul Kemp pkemp1998@cox.net
- Candy Hemmer chem3@allstate.com
- Scot Sorensen ssorensen@neb.rr.com
- Marvin Fast mandjfast@charter.net
- Greg Rorris gregrorris@cableone.net