



STAR SWIMMING, Inc.

2025 – 2026 Team Handbook

STAR HISTORY

The history of STAR is the story of the rise of a small local swim club into a nationally ranked swimming power. In 1961, a group of parents from the Lake Shore area of Hamburg started a local swim club called the Lake Shore Swim Club. As a charter member of the Niagara Swim League, Lake Shore won numerous league titles and became a dominant force locally. As the team steadily progressed toward its goal of national prominence. The club started to attract swimmers from throughout the Southtowns. Recognizing the broad appeal of the program, the name of the club was changed in 1981 to the Southtowns Aquatic Racers (STAR). In 1996, the Board of Directors changed its name to STAR Swimming. Today, STAR has swimmers from all over Buffalo, Jamestown, as well as Canada.

MISSION

STAR builds champions in and out of the water, fosters youth dreams in a safe and supportive environment, and develops dedication and excellence in their lives.

CORE VALUES

ACCOUNTABILITY, RESPECT, RESILIENCE, FUN, and PASSION

VISION

To be a Western New York Club with a national presence.

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to STAR Swimming! STAR is in the business of developmental sports for adolescents. We provide the service of teaching long-term athletic development through the vehicle of swimming. We are thrilled you are a part of our team!

This handbook is a very useful tool to help answer many of the questions that you might have about STAR Swimming.

If at any time you have additional questions, comments or concerns please do not hesitate to reach out to any board member or coach. Below are their names and contact information:

Team Contact Information

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TRAINING GROUP STRUCTURE

It is our goal at STAR Swimming to provide each athlete with the opportunity to reach his or her full potential in and out of the pool. STAR team members are divided into 4 main training groups with subgroups (as needed) at each level. The groups are designed with 2 main objectives:

- 1) Athletes will train with other athletes in their age range
- 2) Athletes will train with other athletes in their ability range.

This structure gives swimmers increased connection to their coaches, more personalized training programs, and a coach to be accountable to. It also provides for greater athlete progression and development. The coach of each group is responsible for fostering a relationship with each of the athletes in the group and helping them grow both in and out of the pool. The coach of each group will know the athlete's goals, keep track of their attendance and workout performance, will coach them at meets, and provide leadership. There will be times when each group practices separately and occasions when the entire team practices as one; it will depend on what the coaching staff feels is best for the individual athletes and ultimately, the team.

I. AGE GROUP TRAINING STRUCTURE

EXPLORING SERIES (Grades K-2)

Attendance Expectations: There are no attendance expectations for Exploring; however, swimmers are NOT permitted to attend more than four (4) practices per week.

Competition Expectations: There are no competition expectations for Exploring; however, swimmers may attend STAR hosted 12 & Under meets with their coach's approval.

Technical Requirements: A STAR coach must conduct the evaluation and approve placement in the group.

Group Emphasis: The main focus of this group is on improving stroke technique in all four strokes. In addition, this group works to improve their fundamentals of turns and starts for all strokes. There is a very large emphasis on developing a strong and consistent kick for all four strokes.

The goals of the group are:

- Swimmers engage in educational practices.
- Swimmers are engaged and demonstrate good listening skills.
- Swimmers develop a love for swimming and have fun!
- Swimmers can legally swim a 100-yard individual medley without stopping.
- Swimmers are technically proficient in all 4 strokes.
- Swimmers are able to execute a flip turn.
- Swimmers meet the USA Swimming certifications standards for racing starts.

Partial season Block Registration is available for this group. Please see page 13 of the handbook for more information.

LEARNING SERIES (Grades 3 - 5)

Learning 2

Attendance Expectations: There are no mandatory attendance for Learning 2. The recommendation would be two to three practices per week however, swimmers are NOT permitted to attend more than five (5) practices per week.

Competition Expectations: Learning 2 swimmers are expected to compete in STAR hosted 12 & Under meets, as well as STAR hosted and other local invitationals.

Technical Requirements:

- o Must be able to proficiently swim 50 yards of freestyle and 50 yards of backstroke.
- o Must have working knowledge of butterfly and breaststroke.
- o A STAR coach must conduct the evaluation and approve of placement in the group.

Performance Requirements: There are no performance requirements for Learning 2.

Group Emphasis: The main focus of this group is on increasing efficiency in freestyle and backstroke. This group also learns the basic fundamentals of breaststroke and butterfly. There is a very large emphasis on developing strong and consistent kicks for all strokes. Swimmers also receive instruction for racing starts and turns. Practices are educational, and swimmers have fun!

Partial season Block Registration is available for this group. Please see page 13 of the handbook for more information.

Learning 1

Attendance Expectations: There is minimum expectation of 60% (3 per week) practice attendance on a weekly basis.

Competition Expectations: Learning 1 swimmers are expected to compete in STAR hosted 12 & Under meets, as well as STAR hosted and other local invitationals. In addition, any swimmer that qualifies for Niagara Championship meet is expected to compete for the team.

Technical Requirements:

- o Must be able to swim a 100-yard individual medley without stopping.
- o Must be technically proficient in all 4 strokes.
- o Must be technically proficient in long & short axis turns and able to perform breaststroke pull-outs.
- o Must meet the USA Swimming certifications standards for racing starts.
- o A STAR coach must conduct the evaluation and approve of placement in the group.

Performance Requirement:

- o Must have USA Swimming meet experience.
- o Must be able to swim 10x50 freestyle on 1:00, swim 4x100 IM on 2:15, and kick 10x50 on 1:15 in more than one stroke.

Group Emphasis: Swimmers continue the development of proper stroke mechanics for all strokes, as well as starts and turns. This serves as an introduction to higher levels of competition. There continues to be a large emphasis on developing a strong and consistent kick for all four strokes.

DREAMING SERIES (Grades 6 - 8)

Dreaming 2

Attendance Expectations: There are no mandatory attendance for Dreaming 2. The recommendation would be three to four practices per week however, swimmers are NOT permitted to attend more than five (5) practices per week.

Competition Expectations: Dreaming 2 swimmers are expected to compete in STAR hosted meets and other local invitationals. In addition, any swimmer that qualifies for a Niagara Swimming Championship meet is expected to compete for the team.

Technical Requirements:

- o Must be able to proficiently swim 50 yards of freestyle and 50 yards of backstroke, as well as 25 yards of butterfly and breaststroke.
- o A STAR coach must conduct the evaluation and approve of placement in the group.

Performance Requirements: There are no performance requirements for Dreaming 2.

Group Emphasis: Swimmers continue the development of proper stroke mechanics for all strokes, as well as starts and turns. There continues to be a large emphasis on developing a strong and consistent kick for all four strokes. Swimmers learn to incorporate the underwater dolphin kick into their starts and turns.

Dreaming 1

Attendance Expectations: There will be a minimum expectation of 80% (4 per week) practice attendance on a weekly basis.

Competition Expectations: Dreaming 1 swimmers are expected to compete in STAR hosted and other local invitationals, as well as in travel meets for elite competition. Any swimmer that qualifies for a Niagara Championship meet is expected to compete for the team. In addition, swimmers who qualify are encouraged to compete in Eastern Zone Championships, the Speedo Championship Series, and the USA Swimming Junior Nationals.

Technical Requirements:

- o Must be able to swim a 400-yard individual medley without stopping.
- o Must be technically proficient in all 4 strokes
- o Must be technically proficient in all 7 turns & breaststroke pull-outs
- o Must have a proficient underwater dolphin kick
- o A STAR coach must conduct the evaluation and approve of placement in the group.

Performance Requirements:

- o Must be able to swim 10x100 freestyle on 1:45, swim 6x100 IM on 2:00, and kick 10x50 on 1:10 in more than one stroke

Group Emphasis: The group emphasizes more advanced stroke techniques for all strokes, including refined starts and turns. The underwater kick begins to be mastered at this level. Goal setting and the subsequent mental training required to accomplish these goals is a primary focus of this group. Swimmers will TRAIN to TRAIN.

II. SENIOR TRAINING GROUP STRUCTURE

Senior 2

Goals and Expectations of the Senior 2 Group:

- Prepare athletes for both competency at the District, Qualifier, and for movement into Achieving Group (if desired)
- To consistently improve commitment level and training/racing ability from season to season
- Consistently improve technique
- Learn skills and drills
- Increase fitness level and strength
- Learn competitive spirit
- Attendance should improve, not decline as the athlete matures
- Participation in all meets

Senior 1

Requirements: (coaches reserve the right to include or deny any swimmer from this group)

- 15 & Over Niagara Championship SCY Standard (for HS Athletes) / 4x 13&14 Niagara Championship Standards (for 8th Graders) qualifying times
- 85% attendance to stay in the group (Coach retains discretion of accepting absences which do not count against the attendance figure)
- Strong desire to improve
- Good standing with coaching staff
- Ability to train with other swimmers in the group

Goals and Expectations of the Senior 1 Group:

- Prepare athletes for both competency at the Sectional, District, and national level.
- To consistently improve commitment level and training/racing ability from season to season.
- Actively improve distance per stroke.
- Learn leadership skills.
- Attendance should improve, not decline as the athlete matures.
- Training attitudes should be more productive and supportive as the athlete gets older.
- Athletes must conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to actions needed to promote and support the goals

Senior 1 & Senior 2:

- All senior group placements are done at the discretion of the coaching staff

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- These are guidelines that we use in structuring the Age Group and Senior swimming program. **All group placements are done at the coaching staff's discretion.**
- STAR Swimming training group structure is designed for every athlete's LONG-TERM development.
- As a general rule of thumb, the more you attend practice, the more benefit and enjoyment the athlete will receive.
- When coaches are considering redeployment an athlete to the next swimming level, they look at that athlete being placed in the middle of the next group rather than achieving the minimum standards. We want athletes to thrive in their new group, not just survive.

Team Website

STAR uses TeamUnify (TU) as our website proxy. We are confident you will find TeamUnify to be easy to use and helpful in providing you a wealth of information. With the TU software platform, you will be able to view your account at any time. Monthly invoice notifications will be sent via e-mail, and payments, including charges for meet entries can be made online.

Team Apparel

Apparel – We will sell our team spirit apparel 3-4 times throughout the year. An e-mail will be sent letting you know that the store is open and will provide a link to access the online store. The store will remain open to accept orders and payment for a designated period of time.

Caps – An order form will be e-mailed out for personalized silicone swim caps several times per year. Generic STAR silicone caps are available for purchase anytime. Have your child ask your coach to obtain a cap.

STAR Team Registration

Registration is managed through Team Unify. To register, you must register online at www.starswimming.org. Here you will select:

- Athlete Training Group - choose the group that correctly corresponds to your child's grade level.
- Payment Options
 - o Annual/One-Time Payment: Payment of dues in full at the start of the season. **This payment must be by personal check.** You will receive an e-mail from the office manager after you complete your online registration with the total amount due. Mail payment to STAR Swimming, PO Box 361, Hamburg, NY 14075 by the end of September. Please note that there will be a \$20.00 service charge for all bank returned checks.
 - o Monthly Payment Plan: Installment payment of 10 monthly payments (due October 1 through July 1). These monthly payments must be made online either by credit card or ACH transfer. If you choose the monthly payment plan, an approximate 3-4% surcharge will be added to each payment to cover processing fees.

Regardless of which payment option you choose, **All families must have a credit card or ACH transfer on their account.** All meet fees or other miscellaneous fees will be made using this payment option. If a payment does not go through, the bookkeeper will notify you and ask you to put a new card on your account and will then re-run the payment.

Any family whose account is 60 days or more past due will have their child(ren) removed from all future meets until the payment is paid in full.

Each registering family must complete the STAR Policy Acknowledgement Form via Google Form indicating your agreement to all policies outlined in this Team Handbook and/or mandated by USA Swimming.

Swimmer Membership Dues & Fees

Full Year Swimmer Dues

Suggested for all swimmers; required for Learning 1, Dreaming, Senior Teams.

Swimmer dues are structured based on the following:

- Dues vary with the level of the athlete.
- A multi-athlete family receives a 5% discount on the second and subsequent child.
- The base dues represent the total dues a family pays if they meet the minimum service requirement (see next page).

Level	First Swimmer	Second +
Exploring Series (Gr K-2)	\$575	\$545
Learning Series (Gr 3-5)	\$975	\$925
Dreaming Series (Gr 6-8)	\$1,400	\$1,330
Senior Team (Gr 9 & up)	\$1,725	\$1,640

Outreach Program

USA Swimming provides an OUTREACH PROGRAM for those families that can demonstrate financial need. The STAR Swimming Outreach Program **REQUIRES** a family to provide proof of income and then the application must be submitted to the STAR Board of Directors for approval. The STAR Board reserves the right to cap the number of Outreach grants provided each year. The application can be found on the STAR Website under the STAR Membership tab. Families who participate in the Outreach Program are still required to complete the service requirements.

Full-Year Commitment Policy (does not apply to Partial Block Registration Option)

In order to allow proper planning and budgeting, swimmers and their families are required to make a financial commitment for the entire swim year from September through August. Should you decide to terminate your participation with STAR, the unused portion of the annual dues is nonrefundable and any outstanding dues (including the remainder of monthly dues payments), and entry fees are considered an obligation to STAR and are due upon termination of participation. Our monthly payment plan is for our families' convenience and is not a mechanism for partial year membership.

The one exception to the full-year commitment is for swimmers who are new to STAR. If a swimmer has not swum for STAR before, there is a free two-week tryout period. If the swimmer chooses to join STAR other than in September, the swimmer may, for the first year only, select the monthly payment option, with payments starting in the month he or she joins the team.

Returning swimmers are required to register for the entire year. If a returning swimmer rejoins the team mid-season (for example, if she trains with a high school team exclusively during the fall), the full year's dues are still required.

Family Participation Policy

STAR is distinguished by a low swimmer-to-coach ratio, the training level of the coaches, and high quality training facilities. What makes us able to combine all of these into one team is hosting high quality meets.

The Benefits of Volunteering

The chart below illustrates that, depending on your child's age, you can earn up to 100% off of your child's dues by volunteering at our meets. Besides reducing your child's dues, there are several other benefits to families through volunteering at meets:

- ❖ it keeps you busy during meets,
- ❖ it helps you to learn most about your child's sport,
- ❖ it almost always gets you on deck for your child's swims, and
- ❖ it enables you to get to know the other STAR families in less time.

We believe that by having our parents support the team we are able to support a positive team atmosphere!

Service Requirements

Families are required to volunteer at STAR-hosted swim meets OR pay an opt-out penalty. A range of service opportunities are available (e.g., timer, marshal, hospitality). Before each meet, family members sign up for those roles they are eligible for (some require training). Each role is associated with a given number of service credits (typically 10-20 credits per role, with each session spanning approximately 4 hours). The highest level athlete in a family is used to determine the family service requirement. The table below provides the requirements for the Short Course and Long Course seasons by level. The two seasons are treated independently, with penalties (see below) assessed after each season. Hosted meets for each season are displayed on pages 15&16 in the handbook. Finally, families at the learning level and above are expected to volunteer for at least one session at a high-level meet.

Level	Short Course: Sept - March (Credits)	Long Course: May - August (Credits)	High Level Meet* (Session)
Exploring Series	75	60	0
Learning Series	95	75	1
Dreaming Series	115	90	2
Senior Team	135	105	2

* Speedo Sectional Championships & Eastern Zone LC Senior Zone Championships are considered high-level meets.

Service Penalty

Families who do not meet the minimum service credit requirements are charged \$5 per unmet service credit. The fee will be charged to your account twice during the swim season (i.e., at the end of Short Course season in April and at the end of Long Course season in August). In addition, families with an athlete at the Learning, Dreaming, and/or Senior levels who do not work at least one session at a high-level meet are charged \$50 in August. Families who are in their first year of membership with STAR Swimming have the opportunity to make up their unworked short course credits during the long course, their accounts will be credited in August. If a family earns additional credits during the short course season, these do NOT apply towards the long course required credits. All fees must be paid in full by August 31st . **Athletes will NOT be allowed to sign up for the next swimming season until all assessed fees are paid in full.**

Service Reward

Families who accrue service credits that exceed the minimum requirements earn a reward of \$1.50 for each service credit above the minimum. The reward analysis considers the total service credits accrued over both the SC and LC seasons relative to the sum of the minimum SC and LC seasons. The reward is applicable to their bill for the next swim season.

For single-athlete families, the service reward cannot exceed the smaller of (1) the base dues for the current swim season and (2) \$900.

Multi-athlete families first earn a reward associated with the highest-level athlete. This first service reward cannot exceed the smaller of (1) the base dues for the highest-level athlete for the current swim season and (2) \$900. The family is then eligible to earn a reward for the second-highest-level athlete after they contribute the minimum service credits associated with the second-highest-level athlete. This second service reward cannot exceed the smaller of (1) the base dues for the second-highest-level athlete for the current swim season and (2) \$900. This process repeats for all athletes within a family. Please see the examples below.

A graduating senior can remain on account for 4 consecutive years and have their service reward credit applied to their "College Swimmer" dues OR it can be refunded if requested in writing. A family may also opt to waive their graduating senior volunteering refund and donate it to STAR Swimming.

Member Dues with Service Requirement Examples

Example 1

Consider a family with a single athlete at the Dreaming level.

Base: \$1,360

Total service requirement (SC + LC): 205 credits

Service Credits (SC)	Penalty*	Reward
0 to 204	$\$5 \times (205 - SC)$	\$0
205	\$0	\$0
206 to 805	\$0	$\$1.50 \times (SC - 205)$
806+	\$0	\$900

* Assessed independently after the Short Course and Long Course seasons.

Example 2

Consider a family with athletes at the Exploring and Dreaming levels.

Base: $\$1,360 + \$535 = \$1,895$

Service requirement: $\max(205, 135) = 205$ credits

Service Credits (SC)	Penalty*	Reward
0 to 204	$\$5 \times (205 - SC)$	\$0
205	\$0	\$0
206 to 805	\$0	$\$1.50 \times (SC - 205)$
806 to 940	\$0	\$900
941 to 1297	\$0	$\$1.50 \times (SC - 340)$
1298+	\$0	\$1435

* Assessed independently after the Short Course and Long Course seasons.

Block Registration Option

This option is ONLY for athletes on the Exploring Team or the Learning 2 Team.

It is designed to give young athletes an introduction to team swimming, while also providing the freedom to participate in different sports throughout the year.

Block Dates (2025-2026)
Fall (Sept 8 - Dec 7)
Winter (Jan 5 – April 2)
Spring (April 20 – July 19)

Block Registration Dues	
Exploring Team Blocks Grades K-2	1 st Swimmer - \$265
	2 nd Swimmer - \$250
Learning Team Blocks Grades 3-5	1 st Swimmer - \$415
	2 nd Swimmer - \$395

Partial Block Registration Understandings:

1. This partial year registration option is available for ONLY Exploring and Learning 2 team members.
2. If your child is on Learning 1 and would like to opt to swim using the partial season block option, they MUST swim with the Learning 2 group.
3. Families can register their swimmers for 1 or 2 blocks. If you plan to register for all three blocks, you should instead register using the Full Year Swimmer Dues on the previous page.
4. If an athlete registers for the Fall and Winter block and chooses to register for Spring, their dues for the Spring block will be prorated according to the full year dues. These families will be subject to an increase in volunteer requirements as communicated by the registrar.

College Swimmers

STAR offers a special program for college swimmers. College swimmers who wish to train with STAR outside of the college season (summer months) are eligible to join STAR on a monthly basis of \$75 per month. Those athletes who are beyond high school age and wish to train year round are eligible to join STAR on a monthly basis for \$100 per month (billed Oct – July). There is no service requirement for college swimmers. College families that volunteer during the season and earn 150 credits will get 2 months of free dues applied to the following season. Free dues are not refundable.

Transferring Athletes

STAR requires that all athletes who wish to transfer to our club from another local swim team have fulfilled all financial obligations with their former team.

Other Fees/Rewards

USA Swimming Registration

All swimmers at all levels must register each year with USA Swimming for insurance purposes. This will be completed and paid for online through USA Swimming. Swimmers who are renewing their USA Swim membership will receive an email to prompt them to complete the registration beginning around November. Swimmers who have never been registered with USA Swimming are allowed a two-week trial period before registering. USA Swimming allows for 2 different types of registrations:

A. Premium Registration

This option is for all swimmers who are registering as full-year athletes. This covers the cost of the athlete's insurance through USA Swimming. The fee is paid directly to USA Swimming when you register your swimmer.

B. Single Season Registration

This option is for swimmers who have registered for a single Block and for our college students who wish to train with STAR when they are home for the summer months. The fee is paid directly to USA Swimming when you register your swimmer.

Meet Entries

There is a meet deck fee and charge for each event and/or relay in which a swimmer is entered. Fees vary per meet and are posted on the team website (click on the meet information link). All fees are reflected on your Team Unify Account for your review and are billed monthly.

The STAR coaches will automatically enter swimmers into their events for each meet the team attends. You will be notified by an e-mail from your child's coach when the event selections for a given meet are made. It is each swimmer's or parent's responsibility to check the STAR website, www.starswimming.org, for meet entries. If a swimmer cannot attend a meet or can only attend the meet on certain days, an e-mail must be sent to the athlete's lead coach and then the athlete will be removed from that meet or day(s). Any questions on individual events that a swimmer is entered to swim should be directed to the swimmers lead coach. Each swim meet has its own specific deadline in which to do this.

STAR Finder's Rebate

Any family that is currently with STAR Swimming is eligible for a \$100.00 rebate for each new family they bring to the team. The rebate is given when the new family pays their entire dues commitment for the previous year; it is applied to the following year's dues. In order to be eligible for the rebate, **the new family must inform the team office manager of the STAR family referral at registration.** This does not include new swimmers to the Little STARS program (learn to swim lessons)

2025-2026 STAR-Hosted Meets

**** These are anticipated dates**

SHORT-COURSE SEASON MEETS (October - April)

Meet Name	Date	Description/Important Information
Super STAR Series	Saturday, Oct 11 Saturday, Nov 15 Saturday, Dec 13	All 12&Under swimmers are eligible and encouraged to attend. One meet session in mid-morning-early afternoon, 4 hours max
STAR Fall Classic	Friday-Sunday, November 7-9	All STAR Swimmers are eligible and encouraged to attend. Three sessions: Friday evening, Saturday & Sunday morning. If possible, all swimmers will swim at same times; 12&Under swimmers and 13&Over swimmers in separate pools
STAR Invitational	Thursday-Sunday, December 4-7	Qualifying times needed to enter. Large meet with teams from outside NY. Prelims & Finals format Seven sessions: Thursday evening distance events, Friday, Saturday & Sunday AM prelims, PM finals
STAR Winter Challenge	Friday-Sunday, January 23-25	All STAR Swimmers are eligible and encouraged to attend. Three sessions: Friday evening, Saturday & Sunday morning. If possible, all swimmers will swim at same times; 12&Under swimmers and 13&Over swimmers in separate pools
Speedo Sectional Championships	Thursday-Sunday, March 26-29	High Level Championship Meet! Qualifying times need to be entered. Huge meet with fast swimming! Prelims & Finals format + mid-day Time Trials Seven sessions: Thursday evening distance events, Friday, Saturday & Sunday Prelims/Finals, & time trials
Eastern Zone Age Group Championships <i>Co-hosted with FAST at ECC</i>	Wednesday-Saturday April 1-4	High Level Championship Meet! Qualifying times need to be entered. Prelims & Finals format + mid-day Time Trials

LONG-COURSE SEASON MEETS (May - August)

Meet Name	Dates	Description/Important Information
STAR Summer Kick-Off Meet	May 29-31	All STAR swimmers are eligible and encouraged to attend. Five sessions: Friday evening (all ages), Saturday & Sunday morning (12&Under) & afternoon (13&Over)
Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission Summer Invitational	June 19-21	All STAR swimmers are eligible and encouraged to attend. Five sessions: Friday evening (all ages), Saturday & Sunday morning (12&Under) & afternoon (13&Over)
Niagara LSC Long Course Championships*	Mid-Late July	Qualifying times need to be entered. Prelims & Finals format Seven sessions: Thursday evening distance events, Friday, Saturday & Sunday AM prelims, PM finals
Eastern Zone Long Course Senior Zone Championships	Early August	High Level Championship Meet! Qualifying times need to be entered. Prelims & Finals format + mid-day Time Trials Nine sessions: Thursday, Friday, Saturday & Sunday AM prelims, PM finals plus Sunday afternoon distance events

**Confirmation for this meet is pending.*

Volunteer Timing at Away Meets

IF STAR is required to provide timers for a meet that we are not hosting, and you have a swimmer in the meet, your family should expect to serve as a volunteer timer for at least one session at that meet. A schedule will be created with consideration of when your swimmer is competing. This volunteer session does not count towards the service requirement outlined on page 9. **If a family fails to report for this timing duty a fee of \$50 will be assessed to your account.**

2025-2026 Away Meets Where Volunteering is Required

2026 Niagara Short Course Championship Qualifier	2026 Niagara Open Championships (Golds)	2026 Niagara 14 & Under Gold Championships
Tonawanda Aquatic Center	Webster, NY	Webster, NY
February 27 - March 1	March 12-15	March 20-22

USA Swimming Safe Sport

STAR Swimming is committed to safeguarding all of its members with the welfare of its athletes as the highest priority. Safe Sport is USA Swimming's comprehensive abuse prevention program and provides tools for swim clubs to educate their members and intervene in risky situations. To enable us to comply with Safe Sport guidelines, the following codes of conduct are followed by STAR athletes, coaches, families, and volunteers:

Codes of Conduct

A. ATHLETE Code of Conduct

The purpose of a code of conduct for athletes is to establish a consistent expectation for athletes' behavior. The following statements are expectations for all athletes on the STAR Swimming Team:

- ☐ Athletes will respect and show courtesy to my teammates and coaches at all times.
- ☐ Athletes will demonstrate good sportsmanship at all practices and meets.
- ☐ Athletes will set a good example of behavior and work ethic for the younger teammates.
- ☐ Athletes will be respectful of all teammates' feelings and personal space. Swimmers who exhibit sexist, racist, homophobic, or otherwise inappropriate behavior will be faced with consequences.
- ☐ Athletes will show respect for all facilities and other property (including locker rooms) used during practices, competitions, and team activities.
- ☐ Athletes will refrain from foul language, violence, behavior deemed dishonest, offensive, or illegal.
- ☐ If an athlete disagrees with an official's call, he/she will talk with their coach and not approach the official directly.
- ☐ Athletes will obey all of USA Swimming's rules and codes of conduct.

If an athlete were to violate this code of conduct, they may be subject to disciplinary action determined by the coaches and the board of directors.

B. PARENT Code of Conduct

The purpose of a code of conduct for parents is to establish consistent expectations for behavior by parents. The following statements are expectations for all parents whose children swim on the STAR Swimming Team:

- ☐ Parents will set the right example for their children by demonstrating sportsmanship and showing respect and common courtesy at all times to the team members, coaches, competitors, officials, parents, and all facilities.
- ☐ Parents will get involved by volunteering, observing practices, cheering at meets, and talking with their child and their coach about their progress.
- ☐ Parents will refrain from coaching their child from the stands during practices or meets.

- ☐ Parents understand that criticizing, name-calling, use of abusive language or gestures directed toward coaches, officials, volunteers, and/or any participating swimmer will not be tolerated.
- ☐ Parents will respect the integrity of the officials.
- ☐ Parents will direct their concerns to their child's training group coach, head coach or a SafeSport supervisor.

If a parent fails to adhere to these expectations, they may be subject to disciplinary action.

C. MEET VOLUNTEER Code of Conduct

The purpose of a code of conduct for STAR meet volunteers is to establish consistent expectations for behavior by volunteers. The following statements are expectations for all volunteers at STAR Swimming hosted meets:

- ☐ Volunteers will set the right example for the athletes by demonstrating sportsmanship and showing respect and common courtesy at all times to the team members, coaches, competitors, officials, parents, and all facilities.
- ☐ Volunteers will refrain from coaching the athletes during the meets.
- ☐ Volunteers understand that criticizing, name-calling, use of abusive language or gestures directed toward coaches, officials, other volunteers, and/or any participating swimmer will not be tolerated.
- ☐ Volunteers are expected to adhere to the start and end times outlined under the "Job Sign-up". They are expected to stay for the length of their entire job or until a volunteer coordinator or meet director excuse them from their duties. Any emergency causing the volunteer to arrive late, leave early, or miss altogether should be communicated to the volunteer coordinator as soon as possible.
- ☐ Volunteers will direct their concerns to the coordinator for the volunteer's acting position, meet director, or SafeSport supervisor.

If a meet volunteer fails to adhere to these expectations, they may be subject to disciplinary action.

D. COACH Code of Conduct

The purpose of this code of conduct for coaches is to establish common expectations for all members of the coaching staff of STAR swim club. It is to be used as a guide to promote a positive team environment and good sportsmanship.

The following statements are expectations for our STAR Coaching staff:

- ☐ At all times, adhere to USA Swimming's rules and code of conduct.
- ☐ Set a good example of respect and sportsmanship for participants and fans to follow.
- ☐ Act and dress with professionalism and dignity in a manner suitable to his/her profession.
- ☐ Respect officials and their judgment and abide by the rules of the event.
- ☐ Treat opposing coaches, participants, and spectators with respect.
- ☐ Instruct participants in sportsmanship and demand that they display good sportsmanship.
- ☐ Coach in a positive manner and do not use derogatory comments or abusive language.

- ❑ Win with humility and lose with dignity.
- ❑ Treat every athlete fairly, justly, impartially, intelligently, and with sensitivity.
- ❑ Always place the well-being, health, and safety of swimmers above all other considerations, including developing performance.
- ❑ Continue to seek and maintain their own professional development in all areas in relation to coaching and teaching children.
- ❑ Always maintain a professional separation between coach and athlete.

Any complaints of a coach violating this code of conduct will be brought to the attention of his/her supervisor and/or the club's board of directors.

Electronic Communication Policy

A. Direct Communication

STAR Swimming recognizes the prevalence of electronic communication and social media in today's world. Many of our swimmers use these means as their primary method of communication. While STAR Swimming acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, the club also realizes that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

All communications between a coach or other adult and an athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. The content and intent of all electronic communications must adhere to the USA Swimming Code of Conduct regarding Athlete Protection adhering to the stipulated guidelines provided in the Minor Athlete Abuse Protection Policy (MAAPP). As with any communication with an athlete, electronic communication should not contain or relate to any of the following:

- drugs or alcohol use;
- sexually oriented conversation; sexually explicit language; sexual activity
- the adult's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems; and
- inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures

With respect to electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether the electronic communication with swimmers is **Transparent, Accessible and Professional**.

Transparent means that all electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be clear. Your communication should not only be clear and direct, but also free of hidden meanings, innuendo and expectations.

Accessible means that all electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of STAR Swimming records.

Professional means that all electronic communication between a coach and an athlete should be conducted professionally as a representative of STAR Swimming. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a staff member.

If your communication meets all three of the T.A.P. criteria, then it is likely your method of communication with athletes will be appropriate.

TEXTING: Subject to the general guidelines mentioned above, texting is allowed between coaches and athletes during the hours from 8am until 8pm. Texting only shall be used for the purpose of communicating information directly related to team activities.

E-MAIL: Athletes and coaches may use e-mail to communicate between the hours of 8am and 8pm.

When communicating with a minor athlete through text or e-mail, the athlete's legal guardian must also be copied on any/all message(s).

B. Social Media Sites

FACEBOOK: Coaches may have personal Facebook (or other social media site) pages, but they are not permitted to have any athlete member of the Club join their personal page as a "friend." A coach should not accept any "friend" request from an athlete. In addition, the coach should remind the athlete that this is not permitted. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to "private message" each other through social media sites. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to "instant message" each other through chat or other IM method. Coaches are encouraged to set their pages to "private" to prevent athletes from accessing the coach's personal information.

STAR Swimming has an official Facebook page that athletes and their parents can "friend" for information and updates on team-related matters.

TWITTER/INSTAGRAM: STAR Swimming has an official Twitter/INSTAGRAM page that coaches, athletes and parents can follow for information and updates on team-related matters. Coaches are not permitted, as per www.usaswimming.org/protect, to follow athletes on social media sites. Likewise, athletes are not permitted to follow coaches on these sites either. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to "direct message" each other using Twitter or Instagram.

REQUEST TO DISCONTINUE ALL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

The parents or guardians of an athlete may request in writing that their child not be contacted by coaches through any form of electronic communication. This request is to be made directly to the coach and Board of Directors at any time.

BULLYING POLICY

PURPOSE

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at STAR Swimming and will not be tolerated. Our club is committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for all our members. If bullying does occur, all athletes and parents should know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a coach, parent or board member.

Objectives of the Club's Bullying and Action Plan:

1. To make clear that the club will not tolerate bullying in any form.
2. To define bullying and give all board members, coaches, parents and swimmers a good understanding of what bullying is.
3. To make it known to all parents, swimmers and coaching staff that there is a policy and protocol should any bullying issues arise.
4. To make the protocol of reporting bullying clear and understandable.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

The USA Swimming Code of Conduct prohibits bullying. Generally, bullying is the use of aggression, whether intentional or not, which hurts another person.

In accordance with The USA Swimming Code of Conduct, Star defines bullying as the severe or repeated use of physical acts of oral, written, or electronic messages directed to another that, to a reasonably objective person has the effect of:

1. causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other member's property.
2. placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage of his/her property.
3. creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming activity.
4. infringing on the rights of the other member at any USA Swimming activity.

WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior.

The most common places where cyberbullying occurs are:

- Social Media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Tik Tok
- Text messaging and messaging apps on mobile or tablet devices
- Instant messaging, direct messaging, and online chatting over the internet
- Online forums, chat rooms, and message boards, such as Reddit
- Email
- Online gaming communities

REPORTING PROCEDURE

An athlete who feels that he or she has been bullied is asked to talk to his/her parents or talk to a coach or board member in person or via e-mail. 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 appropriate club leadership as soon as possible to make sure that memories are fresh, the behavior can be accurately recalled, and the bullying behavior can be stopped as soon as possible.

HOW STAR HANDLES BULLYING

If bullying is occurring at our club or it is reported to be occurring at or club, we address the bullying by FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED and SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED using the following:

FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED

1. First we will get the facts by getting the story from several sources, beginning with the swimmers. We will collect all the information available. We will listen without blaming and will not label the act until all information is collected and we determine if the situation is one of bullying.
2. In order to determine if the act is bullying, we will consider the following:
 - What is the history between the swimmers involved?
 - Have there been past conflicts?
 - Is there a power imbalance?
 - Has this happened before? Is a child worried it will happen again?
 - What are the differences in the two sides of the story?

SUPPORTING THE KIDS INVOLVED

If the coaches or board decide that bullying has occurred, STAR will:

- a) Listen and focus on the victim. Learn what's been going on and show we want to help.
- b) Assure the bullied athlete that bullying is not his or her fault.
- c) Work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied child.
- d) Develop a plan to address behaviors going forward.

ADDRESSING BULLYING BEHAVIOR

In order to address the bullying behavior, STAR will:

- a) Make sure the aggressor knows what the problem behavior is
- b) Calmly tell the aggressor that bullying will not be tolerated. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
- c) Involve the child who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation (e.g., written apology, etc.)
- d) In the event of a severe bullying incident or repeated bullying offences with the same offender, the head coach and/or board will determine if disciplinary consequences should be assigned to the child who bullied.

STAR SWIMMING DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

The following disciplinary procedures apply to behavior occurring during or at an activity or function associated with STAR Swimming including but not limited to swim practice, swim meets, team trips, team outings, or individual group outings. This procedure may also address objectionable behavior by athletes of STAR Swimming occurring outside of club activities.

Classification of Objectionable Behavior:

- **Class I** - Behavior considered severely disruptive, possibly life threatening and/or illegal.
 - Examples may include but are not limited to: sexual abuse or harassment, drug dealing, fighting resulting in serious bodily injury, felony convictions.
- **Class II** - Behavior considered disruptive; having an intended detrimental effect on one's self, other athletes of the team, or the general public; causes significant damage to the reputation of the club and/or the coaches; leading to possible injury of self or others.
 - Examples may include but are not limited to: possession or use of illegal drugs, controlled substances (other than consistent with medical directives), alcohol or other intoxicating substances, or significant vandalism.
- **Class III** - Behavior considered somewhat disruptive and reflecting negatively on STAR Swimming.
 - Examples may include but are not limited to: possession or use of tobacco, minor theft and vandalism, being disruptive in practices or meets, abusive language or behavior, insubordination to the coaching staff, chaperones, or others, littering, other acts of misconduct as determined by the coaching staff.
- **Bullying** - Behavior and reporting procedures are defined the Bullying Policy (page 21-22). Upon evaluation of the reported behavior, it may be defined as a Class I, II, or III Objectionable Behavior.

Discipline Procedure:

Class I and Class II Objectionable Behavior

Upon learning of behavior, STAR Board of Directors may nominate a Disciplinary Committee consisting of current STAR Board members and/or, when appropriate, designees to:

- Notify the parent/guardian of the athlete of the reported behavior
- Investigate the matter by interviewing minor athletes (with parent/guardian authorization), and any other witnesses.
- Report the conduct to law enforcement if required
- Make a disciplinary determination which may include membership termination, suspension, or other action.
- Disciplinary determinations will be emailed to the parent/guardian and athlete within one week of completing all necessary investigation activities with a read receipt confirmation requested.

Class III Objectionable Behavior

When appropriate, immediate corrective action to be addressed by a member of the Coaching Staff, within sight and sound of at least another member of the Coaching Staff or other club representative (Board member, meet marshal, or official). Any corrective action beyond a reprimand/counseling and, if necessary, brief and temporary removal from practice, competition or other club activity, will only be done after consultation with the Head Coach.

(Parents/guardians will be notified if discipline involves a suspension). Repeated Class III offenses may result in the offense being considered a Class II Objectionable Behavior.

Discipline Involving Suspension:

For any class of objectionable behavior implementing a suspension of membership is a possible outcome. Terms of the suspension must be adhered to by the athlete/parent/guardians in order to be reinstated by the Committee at the end of the suspension period. During the suspension period, athletes remain an athlete of STAR Swimming and thereby all dues and fees are still due in full. The athlete cannot be reinstated until any fees and/or dues that are in arrears are paid in full. Additionally, during periods of suspension, all team support requirements remain the responsibility of the athlete's family and any missed sessions will be charged in accordance with the then current fee schedule.

STAR will generally follow suspension process below involving Class I or II Objectionable Behavior:

- 1st Offense - Possible suspension from the team for up to a period of thirty (30) days of the athlete's season (these days may extend into the athlete's next season, if needed).
- 2nd Offense - Possible suspension from the team for up to a period of sixty (60) days of the athlete's season (these days may extend into the athlete's next season, if needed).
- 3rd Offense - Membership may be terminated. IN the alternative, the matter may be elevated to the Board of Directors as outlined under Discipline Procedures for Class I and II Objectionable Behaviors, above.

All disciplinary classifications and decisions by a Coach, Board of Directors, or Disciplinary Committee are final and cannot be appealed.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT POLICY

The board shall have the power to discipline, suspend, or terminate membership in the club in accordance with the policies and procedures set forth in the bylaws and/or club policy handbook. It is the expectation that the board will make every effort to resolve any conflict or dispute occurring **between members**. All conflicts brought to the board will be handled with due process in a timely and confidential manner.

Any member or members having a complaint against another member for an infraction of any bylaw, rule, policy, procedure, or behavioral misconduct may report in writing as outlined below. The complaint must be filed within 15 days of the incident, infraction or discovery of the alleged violation.

All complaints will be submitted in writing to the club president and will contain the following information (if the club president has a conflict of interest in the matter, the complaint will be submitted to another club officer):

1. Name, contact information, USA Swimming membership number and signature of the party/parties filing the complaint.
2. Name of the party/parties against whom the complaint is brought.
3. The specific bylaw, rule, policy, procedure, or guideline allegedly violated.
4. A statement of the facts surrounding the alleged violation. Include all necessary information such as date and time, location, specific facts, witnesses and testimony.
5. Description of actions taken to attempt to resolve this matter informally.
6. The desired action or outcome the grievant wishes to be taken to resolve the conflict by the board.

The club officer who receives the complaint will appoint a review panel of three people from the club membership who are not related or involved with the alleged incident/infraction. The officer will name one of the members of the review panel as chair of the review panel. The review panel will evaluate the complaint and determine what, if any, further action is necessary. If accepted, a copy of the complaint will be sent to the person against whom the complaint has been filed. The parties to the matter will be notified in writing of the names of the members of the review panel. In the event any party believes that a member of the review panel has a conflict of interest, an objection to that member shall be submitted in writing to the club officer within three days of the notification in writing. The objection will indicate with specificity what the basis of the conflict of interest is. The club officer shall determine if the review panel member will be replaced. The decision of the club officer is final. The respondent will have 10 days from the receipt of the complaint to respond to the complaint in writing. The review panel will send a copy of the response to the person filing the complaint.

Upon receiving the response, the chair of the review panel will then schedule a meeting with all parties involved within 7 days for a full investigation of the matter and come to a decision to resolve the complaint.

The review panel will report the findings and recommendations to the club board within 7 days of the last meeting scheduled in the matter. The decision will be presented to the board which may adopt the recommendation, modify the recommendation, or return the matter to the review panel with directions for further investigation and/or for further recommendations by the review panel. Once the decision is adopted or modified by the board, the outcome will be considered final and will be communicated in writing to both parties within 7 days of the final action by the board.

BECOME A USA SWIM OFFICIAL!



****We are looking for STAR parents to become Swim Officials.**

****There is training provided.**

****STAR pays for your Registration with USA Swimming.**

****Swim Official volunteer sessions count as 150% of a typical volunteer session increasing the amount of volunteer credits available to reduce your family's dues.**

To learn more about this exciting opportunity contact

Leo Gibbons: lcgjr1953@gmail.com

WHY WAIT -- GET STARTED -- CONTACT LEO TO REGISTER

All officials will need to register online through the USA Swimming.