



FCA Parent Handbook



**1101 City Avenue
Wynnewood, PA 19096
610-658-5632**

Website: www.swimfca.org

Email: fcaquatics@friendscentral.org

Welcome to Friends' Central Aquatics. Our mission is to create an environment that encourages confidence, fosters independence, and helps young athletes enjoy competitive swimming. It is our hope that swimming for FCA will be a lot of fun (as well as hard work), that our swimmers will have the satisfaction of setting and achieving goals, and that the sense of responsibility attached to organized sports will extend into their lives beyond the pool. This packet explains our basic policies. Please go over it with your children.

PLEASE NOTE: No swimmer will be allowed to participate in practices until they have completed a registration form and submitted the appropriate payment.

USA SWIMMING

United States Swimming is the national governing body of competitive swimming. The Country is divided into 59 Local Swimming Committees (LSCs). We participate in the Middle Atlantic Zone along with roughly 120 other teams.

ATTENDANCE

Swim team practices at FCA are required. The **minimum** number of practices a swimmer must participate in per week are as follows: Novices-2x; Junior-3x; Junior(Gold)-4x; Senior (Bronze)-5x; Senior (Silver)-6x; Senior (Gold)-7x.

FCA PRACTICE SCHEDULE

NOVICE: Tuesday & Thursday: 6:00-7:00 PM; Saturday: 9:00-10:00 AM, Sunday: 12-1PM.

JUNIOR: M/W/F 6:00-7:15 PM; Sat 8:00-10:00 AM; Sun 1:00-2:30 PM

JUNIOR Gold: SAME AS JUNIOR and: Tues 7-8:45PM, Friday 6:30-8AM

SENIOR Bronze: Monday: 6:30-8AM & 7:00-8:45 PM, Tuesday: 6:00-8:00 AM & 7:00-8:45 PM, Wednesday: 7:00-8:45 PM, Thursday: 6:00-8:00 AM & 7:00-8:45 PM, Friday: 6:30-8:00 AM & 7:00-8:45 PM, Saturday: 6:30- 9:45AM; Sun 2:30-4:30 PM

SENIOR Silver: Monday: 6:30-8AM & 6:00-8:45 PM, Tuesday: 6:00-8:00 AM & 7:00-8:45 PM, Wednesday: 6:00-8:45 PM, Thursday: 6:00-8:00 AM & 7:00-8:45 PM, Friday: 6:30-8:00 AM & 6:00-8:45 PM, Saturday: 6:30- 9:45AM; Sun 2:30-4:30 PM

SENIOR Gold: SAME AS SILVER and: Tuesday: **6:00-8:45 PM**, Thursday: **6:00-8:45 PM**

Swimmers are expected to be on time for all practices and meets. They should be on deck with their equipment and ready to swim at the start of the designated time. Water bottles should be filled and goggles and caps should be adjusted before practice starts. *Swimmers are expected to remain for the duration of practice and only complete practices will count toward the required minimums.* PLEASE NOTE: Electronics, such as cell phones, music and game devices, are **NOT ALLOWED** on deck at practices or swim meets. Please respect these rules and plan accordingly.

Parents: **Do not drop off swimmers more than 15 minutes before their designated practice time** unless you are planning to stay with them. **Arrange to pick up your swimmer no later than 15 minutes after the end of his/her designated practice time.** FCA cannot be responsible for swimmers **more than 15 minutes before practice begins or later than 15 minutes after the conclusion of practice.** Please note, you are allowed to watch practices from the gallery, however, **parents are not allowed on deck during practice or meets.** In addition, please refrain from talking to the coaches during this time. Coaches must pay attention to the swimmers in the pool. If you have a question or concern regarding FCA, please email us at: fcaquatics@friendscentral.org or call the office at (610) 658-5632.

PRACTICE & TRAINING

It is crucial that parents understand the importance of consistent and complete attendance at practice and help their children achieve their overall goals. Our philosophy mirrors that set out by Justin Leonard, Executive Director of the American Swim Coaches Association:

Physical development occurs when an athlete imposes previously unexperienced stress on his or her body. A quality swim program revolves around regulated and planned physical stress. Since the body only adapts to stress when provided with an appropriate degree of timed, lower stimulation, a period of stress is always followed by a period of planned recovery. We work very hard, before and during the season, to devise an appropriate balance between periods of stress and periods of recovery. We take into account the age and strengths of each training group, and we consider the rhythm of the entire season.

Even as they are enjoying their training, all swimmers will complain about the hard work. **But regular attendance at workout is critical.** When athletes miss a workout, they upset this delicate balance of stress and rest. For example: If allowed to skip practice, athletes could find that they attend the recovery workouts but miss the stressful workouts. In this case, they would fail to develop and find themselves unable to reach their goals. Or they could find that they attend only the stressful workouts but miss a series of recovery workouts and thus go from sore to more sore. If athletes were to miss an entire cycle of workouts, they would find themselves returning to a stress/recovery cycle that is now two steps up from their last practice.

Furthermore, despite the individual nature of swimming, we practice and compete as a team. Regular attendance demonstrates an athlete's respect for the team, the coaches, and

his or her own goals. Still, your swimmer will complain, and given our society's current craze for packed schedules and early athletic specialization, you will hear about "burnout." First of all, FCA does not believe that swimming needs to be a swimmer's only focus. Second of all, commitment to training hard does not, in and of itself, lead to burn out. According to Head Coach Michael Brooks of York YMCA Aquatics Club: *For every one case of 'burnout' caused by a swimmer's spending too much time in the water and working too hard, we still see a hundred cases of 'pre-emptive burnout': in order not to be burned out, the swimmer comes to practice only when she feels like it, doesn't work out very hard, skips team meets with regularity, and generally makes no commitment to the program or to the sport. Not surprisingly, the swimmer swims slow, makes little or no improvement, and sees her formerly slower competitors whiz right by her. Then we wonder why she 'just can't get jazzed about swimming.'*

Put more simply, "To achieve great things, first show up every day!" Discipline and commitment are good things, not things we should downplay, hide, apologize for, or worst of all, stop demanding just because they may be unpopular.

In the event that a swimmer is ill and will be unable to make their practice quota, swimmers/parents must call the office to inform FCA ahead of time.

VACATIONS, SCHOOL BREAKS & HOLIDAYS:

FCA expects all athletes to train for the duration of the season. Please review the sections in the FCA Parent Handbook beginning with ATTENDANCE (starting on page 1) and pay particular attention to what is said about the delicate balance of stress and rest and "pre-emptive burnout" before planning a vacation or break during the season. FCA cannot emphasize this training credo enough.

If a vacation must occur during the swim season, please contact FCA about it as soon as possible. We will help make arrangements for a swimmer, while away, to continue his or her training, preferably at another USA swim program, and expect parents to understand and support this philosophy. Please note that an extended break can affect an athlete's present training placement and/or future transitioning. In the event that conflicts do occur, swimmers/parents must call the office to inform FCA ahead of time.

PLACEMENT & TRANSITIONING

At FCA, attitude and commitment play as important a role in determining a swimmer's placement in a specific training group as age and mechanical competency. The coaches spend a considerable amount of time and energy evaluating each swimmer, and our ultimate goal is always the swimmer's continued happiness and growth. If a swimmer transitions into a higher group during the course of the season, we will discuss the move ahead of time with the parents and swimmer. Please note, in such an event there will not be a change in the swimmer's fees until the beginning of the next season.

PLEASE NOTE: FCA *alone* reserves the right to place an athlete in the most appropriate training group at any time before and during the season.

Here are some of the questions our coaches ask themselves when evaluating a swimmer's readiness to transition into a group:

- Does the athlete demonstrate a commitment to training and to the FCA program?
- Does the athlete have a positive attitude and the maturity to handle the increased expectations?
- Can the athlete meet the attendance requirements?
- Can the athlete train successfully at the base intervals typically used at the next practice level?
- Does the athlete exhibit proficient strokes and the skills required of the current training group?
- Is the athlete of a similar age and at the experience level of the next training level to ensure they will fit with the next peer group?

In addition, the following age group criteria are considered:

Novice (10 & Under)

2 practices required per week

Practice Schedule: see page 1

Staff evaluation required for all new swimmers. The Novice swimmer must be able to swim 25 yards of freestyle and backstroke without stopping to be considered. Practices develop stroke technique and introduce swimmers to competitive training by working on aerobic endurance and concentration.

Junior & Junior Gold (13 & Under)

3 practices required per week.

Gold: 4 practices required per week.

Practice Schedule: see page 1

Staff evaluation required for all new swimmers. The Junior swimmer should be able to swim 75 yards of each stroke and 50 yards of Butterfly to be considered. Practices focus on stroke drills, starts, and turns. Volume and interval training are introduced, and technique is emphasized. Competition increases, and swimmers work on goal setting, accountability, and commitment. Junior Gold candidates must meet all Junior criteria and display the training maturity to practice 4x a week on a consistent basis.

Senior Bronze (Middle School Only)

5 practices required per week

Practice Schedule: see page 1

Staff evaluation required for all new swimmers. The Senior Bronze swimmer should be able to swim 100 yards of each stroke legally. Seniors have a similar focus to Juniors with a stronger emphasis on volume training.

Senior Silver (13 & Over)

6 practices required per week

Practice Schedule: see page 1

Staff evaluation required for all new swimmers. The Senior Silver swimmer should be able to swim 100 yards of each stroke legally, have B or BB times, and experience in the 400 IM and the 500 Free. The Senior Silvers have a similar focus to Juniors with a stronger emphasis on volume training. This group is also geared towards preparing swimmers who might consider high school swimming and want to make a successful transition.

Senior Gold (13 & Over)

7 practices required per week

Practice Schedule: see page 1

Staff evaluation required for all new swimmers. The Senior Gold swimmer should be able to swim 200 yards of each stroke legally, have BB or A times, qualified for Junior Olympics or Senior Championships, and distance event experience beyond the 400 IM and the 500 Free. These swimmers have made the commitment to training at a high level. Practices emphasize volume training with continued attention to stroke technique as well as biomechanical and physiological progression. This group is also for swimmers that might be considering swimming at the collegiate level and want to make a successful transition.

SWIM MEETS

Swim meets are mandatory for all swimmers. Entries are submitted at the beginning of the season, and all FCA swimmers are entered in events chosen by the coaches. We have implemented this policy because it is very competitive to get into the Middle Atlantic swim meets. In many cases, meets are filled and subsequently closed out months in advance. This policy helps ensure that we will avoid being shut out of a meet and that we can publish a firm schedule. PLEASE NOTE: Mini-Meets are for 8 & Under Age Groups only. All other meets (A/BB/C) are for 9-10's, 11-12's, 13-14's, and Senior's. Eligibility to compete in a particular age group is determined by the swimmer's age on the first day of the meet.

FCA attends roughly five meets during the Fall/Winter season and four meets in the Spring/Summer season. Each meet provides the swimmers with the opportunity to bond, race, have fun, and gage development. FCA believes that meets are a necessary and integral part of our program. We also believe in their team, not just their individual, value. Making a championship cut time is an exciting accomplishment, but competing with and supporting your fellow teammates is equally important.

Swim Meet Policy: Meets are mandatory for all swimmers. Entries are submitted weeks in advance, and everyone is entered. We understand, however, that sometimes conflicts do occur. Parents must notify FCA in writing as far in advance as possible if a swimmer is unable to attend a meet. Because of stringent meet entry deadline requirements FCA will not be able to refund any of the money paid for the swimmer's entry after the swimmer has registered for the swim season. Please send all communications regarding meets to fcaquatics@friendscentral.org. Verbal communications and notes turned into coaches **will not** be accepted.

The FCA season schedules are posted on the bulletin boards outside the pool and on the team website (www.swimfca.org). Upcoming meet information and general announcements will also be posted on the FCA website, www.swimfca.org. The Middle Atlantic website is another source for meet/session times, dates, directions, results, and other pertinent information. The address is www.maswim.org and can be accessed from the FCA web site as well. We encourage all parents to visit the FCA website and Middle Atlantic website as frequently as possible.

ATTIRE/MERCHANDISE

SWIM MEETS: Team suits **MUST** be worn at all meets. Swimmers without a team suit **will not be allowed** to participate in the meet. If you choose to wear a cap, it must be an FCA one.

CHAMPIONSHIPS: Swimmers who qualify for a championship meet may choose to buy and wear one of the TYR technical suits approved by FCA. A memo with specifics will be sent out during the season. **DO NOT BUY** a technical suit without referring to this information. ***No other suits or colors are acceptable.*** These Team Technical suits may only be worn at the championship meets, not at meets held during the regular season. Please note that our FCA logo cannot be printed on the suit--it compromises the fabric--and that technical suits tend to run smaller than normal suits. We highly recommend that the swimmer try one on before purchasing it. As a viable economic alternative, you might want to consider purchasing for these championship events a new team suit in a size smaller than you normally purchase.

PRACTICE: appropriate training attire must be worn for practices. Girls should wear the standard competitive swimsuit. Boys must wear one of three suits: a standard training or "workout brief," a Jammer, or for the unselfconscious, a traditional "Speedo." Brands, styles, and colors run the gambit, and swimmers should purchase whatever "suits" their fancy. Although it is not required, we recommend purchasing a number of caps and another suit for practice to preserve your team uniform for meets.

All team merchandise can be purchased on line through the website or by contacting the FCA office at (610) 658-5632 or fcaquatics@friendscentral.org. **No apparel will be given out without full payment.** Every effort will be made to keep all team related items in stock, but FCA is not intending to offer a complete line of swim gear.

There are a number of sports stores that offer swim gear; however, it has been our experience that Toad Hollow Athletics, (610) 640-0594 provides, at competitive prices, one of the most complete selections of swimming merchandise in the area.

Water bottles are required for practice and for meets. Dehydration is the primary reason for cramps and fatigue. A swimmer loses six to eight ounces of fluid every fifteen minutes. It is very important to prehydrate, to drink during practice, and to rehydrate afterwards. We also recommend deck sandals for locker room passage and meets. Chamois towels are practical and do not take up a lot of room in swim bags or backpacks.

MEET TROUBLESHOOTING LIST

For some parents and swimmers this will be the first time they attend a USA meet. We have put together a trouble-shooting list to help make this process go as smoothly as possible.

PROMPTNESS: Please arrive at the meets early, at least half an hour before warm-ups start. Seating is limited and handled on a first-come first-serve basis. Kids--particularly the younger ones—might need a hand changing in the crowded locker rooms and direction to the entrance of the pool. ***Please be aware, however, that parents are not allowed on the pool deck at any meet.***

ATTIRE—SWIMMERS: Please bring a swim bag to the meet. It should contain:

1. Team suit(s) and team cap-if you wear a cap.
2. Towel and/or chamois (towels tend to get too wet too early)
3. Water bottle
4. Extra change of clothes: FCA T-shirt and a pair of sweats.
5. Sandals/flip-flops or sneakers to wear on deck.
6. Goggles (2-3 pairs. Make sure you bring the goggles you dive with if they are different from the ones with which you train)
7. Nutritional snacks such as fruit, crackers and trail mix. (Swimmers should note that some pools, including FCA, prohibit any eating on deck. Swimmers can “snack” off the deck between events so long as they pay close attention to the order of meet events so they do not miss any of their swims.)
8. Pad lock-you might prefer to leave your belongings in a locker.
9. List of events. Write down your events **and** event numbers on a piece of paper. Younger kids, write this information down on your hands.
10. Electronic Equipment i.e. cell phones, digital media, games, etcetera, are **NOT ALLOWED** on deck for meets and practices.

PARENTS’ ATTIRE: Crowded, indoor pool environments are extremely warm and humid. We highly recommend light trousers, sweats and a T-shirt for the parents.

BEHAVIOR--SWIMMERS: Enthusiasm is expected, but so is politeness and respect for meet officials, coaches, and fellow swimmers. Inappropriate behavior will **not** be tolerated.

BEHAVIOR--PARENTS: USA Swimming has very specific guidelines that parents must follow at meets. **Most importantly, no parent is allowed on deck or near the blocks, under any circumstance, and interaction with coaches must be kept to a minimum.** These rules are particularly important to remember for those meets at which there is not a clear distinction between deck and gallery space.

PARENT PARTICIPATION: *Please be prepared and willing to volunteer!* This is a standard expectation in USA Swimming and we need your categorical support in this regard, especially when we host functions such as the FCA Mini Meets, The Distance Challenge, the Blue and Grey intersquad meet, and the Swim-A-Thon. At away meets, teams are sometimes asked to provide backup timers or runners. Since parents otherwise are not allowed on deck, this is an excellent way to develop a better understanding of how these meets really work.

ALERTNESS: It is very important that parents know what events are going on. Your children will want to come see you in the stands or the foyer to purchase snacks or swim paraphernalia. It is very important that you do not lose sight of time. The meet will not wait, and if your child is not behind the blocks ready to race, he or she will not swim.

MEET PROGRAMS: Purchase a meet program immediately since they frequently sell out. Meet programs provide an excellent overview of the meet and serve as a guide as to when to expect your kid(s) to compete.

NUTRITION: It is very important that the kids eat and hydrate appropriately. All swimmers must have water bottles. It is virtually impossible to over hydrate especially with H₂O, but it is very possible to overeat, especially between events. All kids have different eating habits and there are a myriad of evolving nutritional footnotes, but we strongly recommend, “grazing” with nutritional food (bagels, fruit, trail mix etc.) not junk food or candy over the course of the 4-5 hour session. Plan your primary meals roughly 45 minutes to an hour before competition.

DISQUALIFICATION: All USA meets require swimmers to perform their strokes (or events) legally. Age group swimmers, high school swimmers, college, and Olympic swimmers have all been disqualified. Semantics sometimes come into play, but in general, the rules governing the legality of the strokes, the turns and the events, are straightforward and clearly stipulated in the rulebook. What is of utmost concern is the morale of the child. The majority of officials have kids who swim and are acutely aware of this. Their demeanor when explaining a disqualification to a swimmer is objective, professional and, above all, caring. FCA’s approach to this sensitive issue is to provide care and support first, advice second. And while a disqualification is sometimes tough to bear from the stands, we highly recommend that parents follow the same procedure. Above all, do not jump to your child’s defense by criticizing the official. If you have any questions at all about the specifics of a disqualification, please take up the issue with a FCA coach, not an official or a swimmer, after the session is over.

BEHAVIOR & DISCIPLINE

Because FCA believes that swimmers, regardless of their age, need to demonstrate **respect** for themselves, their teammates, their coaches, their facilities, both at practices and meets, we have a **3-STRIKE POLICY** for inappropriate behavior such as repeated lateness, belligerence, missed practices, missed meets, vandalism, theft, or potentially harmful acts.

Inappropriate behavior will result in the swimmer being dismissed from practice. After two dismissals, the coach will call a meeting with the swimmer's parents and issue a "strike one" warning. Subsequent lateness, belligerence, or disruption will result in the swimmer being issued a "strike two" warning, dismissed from practice, and required to sit out a specified period of time and/or swim meet. Finally, with "strike three" the swimmer will be suspended from the team for the remainder of the season. No refund will be offered on fees. FCA reserves the right to suspend a swimmer without exhausting the 3-STRIKE POLICY when circumstances warrant.

PARENT REPRESENTATIVES

Hopefully this parent package will answer most of your questions. But in order to help all members feel comfortable in the unique sub-culture of USA Swimming, each season a group of brave parents steps forward and volunteers to be accessible as **"Point Parents."** We will provide you with their names and contact information when the season starts. Please feel free to approach them with your questions.

POOL, LOCKER ROOMS, & FACILITIES

Please treat the Friends' Central School campus with the utmost respect. General safety rules will be strictly enforced on deck, in the locker rooms, and throughout the facility. Swimmers are **NOT ALLOWED** in the water or on the racing blocks without permission and staff supervision. Diving is restricted to the deep end and always must be supervised by FCA staff.

Parents, friends, and guests are welcome to watch practice from the bleachers, but **cannot** bring food or drink (other than water) into the pool or gallery area.

MISCELLANEOUS

SOCIAL EVENTS: FCA organizes a couple of non-swimming get-togethers for swimmers and their families: events such as FCA Awards Banquet for Fall/Winter Season and an end of year BBQ in the summer. More specific details about these events will be distributed toward the later half of each season.

USA TRANSFERS: Swimmers from other USA clubs switching to FCA must have a transfer form completed before they can practice. There are no exceptions to this rule.

LIGHTNING & PRACTICE: The FCA pool is grounded and therefore safe during thunder and lightning but Friends' Central School's policy is to take all swimmers out of the water at the sight of lightning for roughly 30 minutes or until the storm subsides. Our team policy for away meets will be governed by the relative facility.

PARKING: All cars must be parked in the FCS parking lot off of City Avenue. **DO NOT** leave your car unattended at the "drop off" circle. These spaces are for emergency vehicles only.

NO DOGS OR PETS ARE ALLOWED ON FRIENDS' CENTRAL CAMPUS

COMMUNICATING WITH FCA

If, at any time, you have a question or concern regarding FCA, please email us at: fcaquatics@friendscentral.org and we will respond as soon as possible. Your swimmer is our top priority.

Communication gaps often occur when parents discuss their disagreements over coaching or team philosophies with other parents rather than talking directly to the FCA staff.

Listed below are some guidelines for how parents can approach difficult issues:

- Try to keep foremost in your mind that you and the coach have the best interests of your child at heart.
- 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 30-50 members. On occasion, an individual child's interest may need to be subordinate to the interests of the group. In the long run the benefits of membership in the group compensate for occasional short-term inconvenience.
- 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 contact FCA.

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF SWIMMING PARENTS

By Rose Snyder

1. Thou shalt not impose your ambitions on thy child.

Remember that swimming is your child's activity. Improvements and progress occur at different rates for each individual. Don't judge your child's progress based on the performance of other athletes, and don't push them based on what you think they should be doing. The nice thing about swimming is that every person can strive to do his or her personal best.

2. Thou shalt be supportive no matter what.

There is only one question to ask your child. "Did you have fun?" If meets and practices are not fun, your child should not be forced to participate.

3. Thou shalt not coach your child.

You have taken your child to a professional coach; do not undermine that coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to support, love, and hug your child no matter what. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job. You should not offer advice on technique or race strategy. That is not your area. This will only serve to confuse your child and prevent a swimmer/coach bond from forming.

4. Thou shalt only have positive things to say at a swimming meet.

If you are going to show up at a swimming meet, you should cheer and applaud, but never criticize your child or the coach.

5. Thou shalt acknowledge thy child's fears.

A first swimming meet, 500 free or 200 IM can be a stressful situation. It is totally appropriate for your child to be scared. Don't yell or belittle, just assure your child that the coach would not have suggested the event if your child was not ready to compete in it.

6. Thou shalt not criticize the officials.

If you do not have the time or the desire to volunteer as an official, don't criticize those who are doing the best they can.

7. Honor thy child's coach.

The bond between coach and swimmer is a special one, and one that contributes to your child's success as well as fun. Do not criticize the coach in the presence of your child; it will only serve to hurt your child's swimming.

8. Thou shalt not jump from team to team.

The water isn't necessarily bluer at the other team's pool. Every team has its own internal problems, even teams that build champions. Children who switch from team to team are

often ostracized for a long time by the teammates they leave behind. More importantly, swimmers who switch teams rarely do better than they did before they sought the bluer water.

9. Thy child shalt have goals besides winning.

Giving an honest effort regardless of the outcome is much more important than winning. One Olympian said, “My goal was to set a world record. Well, I did that, but someone else did it too, just a little faster than I did. I achieved my goal and I lost. This does not make me a failure, in fact, I am very proud of that swim.”

10. Thou shalt not expect thy child to become an Olympian.

There are 225,000 athletes in United States Swimming. There are only 52 spots available for the Olympic Team every four years. Your child’s odds of becoming an Olympian are 1 in about 4,300. Swimming is much more than just the Olympics. Ask your coach why he coaches. Chances are, he was not an Olympian, but still got enough out of swimming that he wants to pass on his love of the sport to others. Swimming teaches self-discipline and sportsmanship; it builds self-esteem and fitness; it provides lifelong friendships and much more. Most Olympians will tell you that these intangibles far outweigh any medals they may have won. Swimming builds good people and you should be happy your child wants to participate.