



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

HEALTHY COMPETITION SKILLS FOR LIFE

Swim Team Handbook
EASTSIDE FAMILY YMCA
Narwhals
2026-2027 Season

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Eastside Family Y program prepares its swimmers not only to compete but to succeed at each level of competitive swimming as they mature. In addition, the program values the development of time management skills, the maintenance of above-average grades in school, and the demonstration of the Y's core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility at all times.

The Eastside YMCA Swim Team season runs from September to March. Practices are held Mon./Tue./Wed./Thur. from 5:45pm-7:00pm for the first practice, and 6:45pm-8:00pm for the second practice. Dual meets and Invitational meets are held on Saturdays in short-course 25-yard or 25-meter pools.

TEAM STRUCTURE

Our swim team is organized into four training levels designed to meet swimmers where they are in their development and provide a clear pathway for continued growth. Group placement is based on a combination of swimming ability, technique, endurance, practice readiness, competitive experience, and coach assessment. Age may be considered, but placement is primarily based on the swimmer's individual development and readiness.

Age:

Swimmers are able to join the team at the age of 5 years old with no exceptions. The swimmer's age is determined for the season as of December 1st for the league. For example, if your child is 13 BEFORE Dec. 1st they will be in the 13-14 age group, if they are 13 AFTER this date they will stay in the 11-12 age group.

New Participant Requirements:

- Jump into the deep end of the pool, submerge, and return to the surface unassisted
- Tread water 1-minute with a good body position, head and ears above the water
- Float on back 30-seconds

Swimmers, 8 and under, must be able to swim one length (25 yards) freestyle and one length (25 yards) backstroke without any assistance and without stopping.

Swimmers, 9 and up, must be able to swim 50 yards freestyle and 25 yards backstroke without any assistance and without stopping.

Training Groups:

Swimmers are encouraged to progress at their own pace. Movement between levels is determined by the coaching staff and is based on demonstrated skills, consistency, effort, maturity, and readiness for the expectations of the next training group.

Level 1 – Introduction to Competitive Swimming:

Level 1 is designed for swimmers who are new to competitive swimming and may be participating on a swim team for the first time. The primary goal of this group is to help swimmers become comfortable with the structure of swim team practices while developing a strong foundation in the four competitive strokes.

Practices focus on basic freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly skills; proper body position and breathing; kicking and introductory drills; starts, turns, and streamlines; lane etiquette; and understanding how swim practices and meets operate.

The emphasis at this level is on learning, confidence, safety, and having fun.

Swimmers are introduced to competition in a positive and supportive environment while learning the fundamentals necessary to advance through the program.

Level 2 – Developmental:

Level 2 is designed for swimmers who understand the basic structure of competitive swimming and are ready to further develop their technique and endurance. This group places a strong emphasis on performing all four competitive strokes correctly and efficiently.

Practices include stroke-development drills, proper starts and turns, underwater streamlines and dolphin kicks, breathing patterns, pacing, basic interval training, and increased swimming endurance. Swimmers also begin developing greater independence during practice, including understanding sets, reading the pace clock, and following coaching instructions.

The primary emphasis of Level 2 is technique before speed. Coaches work to establish strong swimming habits that will allow athletes to become faster and more successful as their training progresses.

Level 3 – Competitive:

Level 3 is intended for experienced swimmers who have established sound technique and are ready for a more competitive training environment. Practices become more challenging and place greater emphasis on endurance, speed, race strategy, and advanced swimming skills.

Swimmers work on refining all four strokes, improving starts and turns, developing stronger underwater skills, learning race-specific pacing, and completing more demanding interval-based training. Athletes are expected to demonstrate increased consistency, focus, and responsibility during practices and competitions.

Competition becomes a greater focus at this level. Swimmers are encouraged to set individual goals, improve personal-best times, compete in multiple events and strokes, and develop the skills necessary to be successful in increasingly competitive meets.

The emphasis of Level 3 is on skill refinement, competitive development, endurance, and race performance.

Level 4 – Advanced/High School Preparation:

Level 4 is the team's highest training group and is designed for advanced swimmers preparing to compete at the high school level and beyond. This group follows a more rigorous training program, including two-hour practices, to prepare athletes for the physical and mental demands of advanced competitive swimming.

Training includes higher-volume and higher-intensity sets, advanced stroke technique, race-specific training, sprint and endurance work, advanced starts and turns, underwater training, pacing strategies, and preparation for championship competition. Swimmers are also expected to develop strong practice habits, accountability, leadership, and an understanding of how consistent training contributes to long-term improvement.

Athletes in Level 4 should arrive prepared to train with purpose and maintain a high level of effort throughout practice. Coaches will help swimmers develop the endurance, technical proficiency, race awareness, and training discipline necessary to successfully transition into high school swimming.

The emphasis of Level 4 is on advanced training, competitive performance, personal responsibility, and preparation for high school swimming.

Moving Between Training Levels:

Progression through the swim team is based on readiness rather than age alone. Coaches will continually evaluate swimmers throughout the season and may recommend movement to another group when appropriate.

Advancement is not based solely on swim times. Coaches may consider stroke technique, endurance, starts and turns, underwater skills, attendance, ability to complete the current group's practices, listening skills, practice behavior, effort, maturity, and readiness for increased training expectations.

Moving to a higher level should represent an appropriate developmental step for the swimmer. The goal of the team structure is not to move swimmers through the levels as quickly as possible, but to ensure that each athlete develops the skills and confidence necessary for long-term success in competitive swimming.

PRACTICES

At all levels, practice sessions develop athletic, personal, and social skills. Consistent attendance is the best way to build a swimmer's abilities, enhance the coach-swimmer relationship, and strengthen the unity of the team as a whole. Cell phone use is not permitted during practice unless they are contacting a parent/guardian for pickup.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Swimmers are required to practice a minimum of 1 day per week to be able to compete at the next scheduled dual meet. Even though this is the required minimum, swimmers progress is dependent on consistent attendance; it is beneficial that swimmers attend practice 2-3 days per week. If a swimmer is unable to make their required attendance for the week due to illness or injury please inform the coaching staff.

SCHEDULE

Practice schedules are distributed to all Eastside Y families for the season. Some updates and revisions may be necessary, especially during the holidays and high school swim season. These updates will be posted on the Narwhals Band App and sent to team email addresses. Urgent practice changes will be sent to parents via REMIND if a practice is canceled due to inclement weather, pool failures, etc.

FACILITIES

The Eastside Family Y Swim Team will be using the Harbor Creek High School pool. The entrance is on the back side of the school building, at the pool entrance doors near the end of the parking lot closest to the tennis courts.

PRACTICE EQUIPMENT – *CLEARLY LABEL ALL ITEMS*

It is important to bring:

- Practice appropriate suit
- Swim cap
- Goggles
- Water bottle
- Towel

Recommended equipment:

- Kickboard
- Pull buoy
- Flippers
- Hand paddles

PUNCTUALITY AND PRACTICE TIMES

Please be on time for all practices. **Swimmers should arrive 15 minutes before practice start time, so they can be changed and ready on deck.** Practices will begin with a mandatory stretching period to prevent injuries (dryland). Practices will not begin until all stretching is completed correctly. Also, during this time coaches will inform swimmers of important information and instructions. If there is a possibility of a swimmer being late, please let one of the coaches know through the Band app or email.

SWIM MEETS

Swim meets are a fun and exciting opportunity for swimmers to measure progress, experience the thrill of competition, and strive for individual and team accomplishments. They provide a break in the practice routine, as well as focal points for practice efforts. All swimmers are encouraged to compete in meets for these reasons. We encourage the Eastside Family YMCA swimmers to compete in team dual meets throughout the year and the YMCA championship meet at the end of the season. Invitational meets are optional but strongly recommended for some practice groups. For invitationals, swimmers will be able to choose which events they want to swim, the coaches are there to help guide them if needed. (There is a fee for each event at invitationals as it is a fundraiser for each team.)

ENTERING MEETS

Meet information will be sent via email to swim team families as well as posted on the team website: www.ymcaerie.org/eastside/eastsideswimteam/

- **Dual Meets** There is no fee for participation in dual meets. Parents can register their swimmer(s) online or at the Eastside Family YMCA Front Desk (phone or in person). Coaches choose the events for swimmers in dual meets but swimmers may request to be entered in certain events. Swimmers will not be expected to swim more than 1 distance event (200-yds or more) unless requested. Most dual meets limit swimmers to either 3 individual events, 3 individual events and 1 relay or 2 individual events and 2 relays.
- **Invitational and Championships** All Invitational information will be emailed to parents with a deadline date for submission. All fees must be submitted online or at the Eastside Family YMCA Front Desk. Information will be emailed and a link will be provided on the Eastside Swim Team website for registration information.

NOTE: Entries submitted after the deadlines will NOT be accepted. Meet entry fees are nonrefundable (exception for relay entries where the swimmer is not selected to swim, or due to a shortage of relay swimmers).

WHAT TO BRING TO MEETS - ***CLEARLY LABEL ALL ITEMS***

- Team suit & cap
- Goggles -extra goggles!
- At least 2 towels
- Team shirt
- Sweats
- Money (for heat sheet, healthy snacks)
- Healthy snacks (if facility permits)

PUNCTUALITY FOR MEETS

Please arrive at the meet location and check-in with coaches on deck 15 minutes before the designated warm-up time.

This will permit swimmers to fully stretch and warm up before competing. Warmups for meets are not optional and if a swimmer will miss a warmup, please inform a coach of their absence the night before or before warmups the day of the meet. There is usually a scratch meeting that happens during or right after warmups. If a swimmer is not present for warmups, without notifying the coach, it is assumed they will not be participating that day and will be removed from the meet. Directions to the most frequently attended meet locations are on the website and posted on the Band app.

TEAM AREA

Swimmers should sit in the designated team area. This promotes team support and unity, which in turn contributes to swimming success and fun. Depending on the facility, there may or may not be a separate spectator area for family members. When there is such an area, parents who are not volunteering sit in the stands. At meets, parents who are not volunteering in the meet are not permitted on the pool deck. This is because deck space is limited and interruptions are distracting to swimmers and coaches. The role of parents at a swim meet is to love and support their children and to set a positive example by volunteering. Swimmers also develop responsibility and camaraderie when working together as a team. In addition, just as swimmers are asked to sit together as a team, parents are invited to do the same. This creates team spirit and support for the swimmers from the spectator stands and is highly encouraging to the team. Swimmers show respect to the facility by picking up all trash in the team area before leaving the meet. Leave the area better than you found it.

BEHAVIOR

Swim meets are an opportunity to display not only their athletic ability but also team pride and sportsmanship. Parents and swimmers alike represent the Eastside Family Y swim team and the YMCA of Greater Erie association. Swimmers are encouraged to cheer for their teammates and to stay until the end of the meet, meet session, or until the last Eastside Family Y swimmer competes. If a swimmer must leave before the end of a meet, please notify one of the coaches before the start of the meet.

HERDING/CLERK OF COURSE/PRE-SEEDING

Some meets offer a clerk of the course to help organize 10 & under swimmers for the events. Dual meets and some other meets do not have a clerk of the course or bullpen and swimmers are responsible to get to their heat and lane. At dual meets, parent volunteers serve as herders who help assemble younger swimmers for each event and send them to the starting blocks. If a swimmer misses an event, he or she may not be able to compete for the rest of the meet.

CHECKING WITH COACHES

Swimmers should talk to their coaches before and after each swim. This is an important opportunity for coaches to give final reminders and encouragement before the event, and to offer praise and constructive review afterward.

RESULTS AND AWARDS

Results are posted on a wall at most invitationals, Championships and Districts. They are typically posted on the pool deck or hallway. The type of award (medals, ribbons, plaques) and the number of awards given at each swim meet are determined by the host team, or by league by-laws. All awards are given to coaches at the end of the meet and are distributed at a later practice. Coaches also receive the official results from the team hosting the meet. These will be uploaded into the team database and emailed to families.

SNACKS

Healthy snacks and beverages (water, sports drinks) are good for swimmers to have during meets, especially during long sessions (see nutrition section for tips). Some facilities do not allow food or drink on deck so please be attentive to policies at the various pools. Swimmers show respect to the facility by picking up all trash in the team area before leaving the meet.

TEAM APPAREL

Swimmers are required to wear Eastside Family Y Swim Team attire, including the team cap at all meets. Wearing team apparel promotes team pride and unity. It also helps coaches, parents and other swimmers locate Eastside Family Y team members.

For championship meets, swimmers in the prep, junior and senior age groups may wear approved "performance" suits such as the Speedo LZR Elite, FSII, or FS Pro. These suits are considerably more expensive and are the last piece of a swim meet preparation for those swimmers who are more physically developed and participate at a very high level of commitment and effort. The benefit of these suits is negligible for young swimmers who are physically undeveloped and who do not train at a level that requires the body to break down and rest before the championship meet. These suits are for championship meets only, as designated by the coaching staff. All swimmers and/or parents are advised to talk to their coach before purchasing such a suit.

SWIMMERS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Eastside Family Y swimmers strive to be positive team members in and out of the pool. Most importantly, swimmers should always remember that they represent the YMCA and the Eastside Family Y Swim Team. Their words and actions reflect not only on themselves but on their teammates, parents, coaches, and the YMCA. With the guidance of coaches and parents, swimmers are expected to demonstrate the YMCA's character development traits of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.

FOCUS ON TEAM

Individual achievements are important but supporting others and working together toward a common goal raises everyone's performance level. Furthermore, shared experiences are more fun and exciting than individual ones. Together Everyone Achieves More. Act, Think, Look, and Talk Positively! Attitudes are contagious so make sure that yours is worth catching. Every member of a team contributes to the overall team experience. Help make ours AWESOME!

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY- for your belongings, words, actions, and swimming. Attend practice regularly. Be on time and remember all equipment (cap, goggles, suit, towel, etc.) Don't blame others when things don't go your way. Excuses satisfy only the person who makes them. Demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times. Athletes with good sportsmanship habits earn the respect of their competitors and gain pride and confidence in themselves. Loud, emotional, or rude displays are inappropriate, regardless of the reason. Always think before you speak or act. Remember that you represent the Y - at the pool and away from it.

SHOW RESPECT- The best way to gain respect is to show respect. Allow others to share their opinions and ideas freely. Follow rules set forth by coaches and officials. Do not talk while others are talking, and don't talk back to coaches or officials. Refrain from speaking or acting negatively toward other swimmers, teams, coaches, or officials. Do not misuse or abuse property – in Ys, at meets, in restaurants, etc.

BE HONEST- Do not lie. Refrain from gossip (which often involves at least one untruth). Do what you think is right, not just what is popular. Give an honest effort toward achieving your stated goals. Communicate with coaches regarding anything that might affect your performance or the team as a whole. Swimmers learn to balance their academic and swimming requirements. This is an important life skill they develop through participation in the program. Sometimes academic tasks become particularly demanding and swimmers feel unusual stress to stretch the balance between school and swimming. In this case, it is better to take a day off from practice and devote the afternoon/evening to academic requirements. Getting out of practice early to study or complete homework means that the swimmer has given less than their best effort to both swimming and academics. It is better to commit fully to academics that day and return to swimming the next.

BE CARING- Put others before yourself and be sensitive to the well-being of others. Help each other out!

TAKE PRIDE- Give an effort that you can be proud of. Maintain an attitude that you can be proud of. Develop team pride by encouraging teammates to do the same. Don't cut corners or take shortcuts.

CODE OF CONDUCT

As representatives of the Eastside Family Y Swim Team and the Eastside Family YMCA, swimmers are expected to speak and behave in a manner that is respectful, responsible, honest, and caring. These guidelines are to be followed by Eastside Family Y swimmers at all practices, meets, and other team functions as well as in electronic communications. Special activities, such as team travel trips, require adherence to additional activity-specific conduct guidelines.

The following behaviors are not acceptable and may result in suspension from the team:

- Unsportsmanlike conduct - taunting, teasing or speaking negatively about teammates, competitors, officials, or coaches.
- Use of inappropriate, strong, or vulgar language or gestures.
- Lying, deceit, dishonesty.
- Littering, abuse, or misuse of equipment, furniture, or other items of property.

The first violation will receive a verbal warning. The second will result in dismissal from the practice, meet, or team function where the violation was made. The third violation will result in suspension from the team for a certain amount of time determined by the swim team director. A fourth violation will cause the removal of the swimmer from the program. Parents will be notified at each step.

The following actions will not be tolerated and may result in removal from the team:

- Verbal or physical abuse toward others.
- Theft of any kind.
- Vandalism or any destruction of property, public or private.
- Use of tobacco products or other illegal substances.
- Consumption of alcoholic beverages or other illegal substances.
- Sexual activity

DRESS CODE

Swimmers are expected to dress with dignity and appropriate taste whenever representing the team. This includes going into and out of practices, meets, and team activities. Swimmers should not show any part of their undergarments outside of their clothes. Rude or suggestive pictures or writing are not acceptable. Skirts and shorts must be of an appropriate length. Pants, shorts, and skirts should not

hang at the waist lower than the hip bones. Swimmers should routinely monitor the condition of their suits so that they are not worn by themselves when they no longer provide adequate coverage and support. Swimmers must be dressed in appropriate attire when arriving/leaving practice. **They should not be leaving practice in a towel and suit, especially during the winter months.**

COACHES

Coaches occupy a unique place in a swimmer's life. Eastside Family Y coaches take their role seriously and strive to be good listeners, mentors, role models, and leaders.

COACHES:

- Instruct swimmers in all aspects of the sport: technique, training methods, mental preparation, competitive strategy, etc.
- Offer encouragement, constructive criticism, and honest assessments with suggestions for improvement
- Demonstrate and encourage values and behaviors consistent with the principles of the YMCA
- Lead the team at competitions
- Make decisions about group placement, meet opportunities, and events for swimmers. Above all, safety is the driving force behind these decisions.
- Communicate with swimmers and parents about plans, issues, and philosophy within the program

***YMCA of Greater Erie swimming policy prohibits staff members from transporting program participants. Please do not ask Eastside Family Y coaches to transport your child to or from practices, meets, or team activities.**

PARENT EXPECTATIONS FOR THE TEAM AND THEIR SWIMMERS

Parents are a vital part of every child's life. They are central figures in the growth and development of their children. Parents are the primary example after which children pattern their behavior and beliefs. For athletes, especially teenagers, the role of parents may change as other adults, including coaches, assume a strong role not only in their physical achievements but also in their mental and emotional development. Because coaches and teammates have such a strong impact on a swimmer, parents should fully investigate the philosophy and conduct of the program before registering their child. When a child begins swimming on a team, the parents put their faith in the program and its coaches to make the child's experience positive, rewarding, and enjoyable. There are ways in which parents can also aid the experience.

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

In swimming, the primary duty for parents is to love and support their swimmer(s) regardless of performance and achievement level. A child needs to know that no matter what happens, he or she is loved and supported. Praise swimmers for their achievements and refrain from comparisons with other swimmers or with the past achievements of a parent or other relative. Whatever a swimmer does or doesn't achieve is a result of many factors and is not a reflection of his or her parents. In addition, much can be learned from challenging or difficult situations such as unrealized goals. By showing love and support to your swimmer during these times, rather than trying to "fix" the situation for them, you allow him or her to learn, grow and develop as an individual.

SET A GOOD EXAMPLE

Children tend to pattern their attitudes and behavior after the example set by their parents. Please be aware of your attitudes and behavior, especially in the team setting. Exemplify good sportsmanship and the positive values of the Y. The Eastside Family Y program encourages swimmers to be honest, caring, respectful, and responsible, to ask questions and address concerns directly, and to serve others. Observing these habits in parents further enforces the lessons taught at the Y. After all, parents represent the team and the Y as much as the swimmers and coaches do.

POSITIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

We ask that parents reserve concerns and disagreements about the program for discussion with a coach or the swim team director. Questioning or criticizing a coach, team member, or the program in front of a swimmer seriously damages the swimmer's trust and confidence in the coach and the team. If your swimmer has a problem, try to gather as much information as possible and address it with the coach or appropriate person directly. Avoid passing judgment, jumping to conclusions, or discussing it with others. Gossip is never constructive.

GET INVOLVED

We expect parents to become involved in the swim team in a constructive way. Numerous volunteer opportunities allow parents to be more involved in swimming and the Eastside Family Y swim team. Swim meets (all meets, but especially those hosted by Eastside Family Y) require extensive volunteer efforts to run. Team social events bring parents, swimmers, and coaches together in an informal and fun setting. Help is always needed with apparel orders and distribution, bulletin board maintenance, team building dinners/activities, and in other areas.

Please respect the time your swimmer spends with his or her coach and teammates during practice or team activities. Reserve instruction and coaching for the coaches and preserve the uninterrupted time that coaches and swimmers spend at practices and meets. If you have a question or concern, contact your child's coach.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Swim meets are not possible without parent volunteers. There are numerous jobs to be filled at meets and volunteering is a great way to stay busy between your child's events. It also gets parents involved in the achievements of all team members and builds relationships with other parents in the swimming community. By sharing volunteer duties at both home and away meets, ESY parents contribute to a community of responsibility and support and they set a positive example for swimmers. In line with YMCA volunteer procedures, all parent volunteers must complete the required volunteer paperwork, including Act 33 & 34 clearances which are paid for by the YMCA. As required by the State of Pennsylvania, parents are not permitted to volunteer, in an official capacity, without completion of an Act 33 & 34 clearance. Applications must be completed online. You may contact the Member Engagement Director, Karen McLellan at kmclellan@ymcaerie.org or 814-899-9622. Please allow at least 10 days for the completion of this process.

Home meets require:

- **Ribbon writers** - Place computer-generated labels on ribbons and other awards for swimmers. No prior experience is necessary. (Invitational)
- **Runners** - After each heat, this person takes cards from timers to the computer operator. No prior experience is necessary.
- **Hospitality** - This is usually reserved for invitational and championship meets. These volunteers provide drinks to other volunteers and workers, act as host/hostess in the hospitality room where coaches and officials go to relax and have a snack. No prior experience is needed.
- **Computer Operator** - This person inputs data during meets (times, relay names, etc.) and generates results from the system. Training on specific meet manager software is needed.
- **Timing System Operator** - This person operates the Colorado Timing System console that times each event electronically. He or she coordinates with the Computer Operator and Referee to keep the meet running efficiently.
- **Clerk of Course** - The clerk organizes swimmers into proper heats, gives them cards if necessary, and sends them to the starting area behind blocks.
- **Herder** - Dual meets and some other meets do not have a Clerk of Course. In these meets, parent volunteers called "herders" are used to assemble the 10 and younger swimmers and take them to the starting blocks.
- **Marshal** - Monitors the pool deck, especially, but not only, during warm-up periods to make sure that safety rules are being followed.
- **Head Timer** - Organizes the timers and acts as a backup timer in case a timer's watch malfunctions.
- **Concessions/Snack Bar** - Sell snack items to swimmers and family members attending the meet.

All meets require:

- **Timers**_ Time each heat in a specific lane using stopwatches that are provided by the host team. This job is very easy and keeps you right next to the action. No prior experience is necessary.
- **Officials**_ These include the starter, referee, and stroke and turn judges. They conduct the meet and address rule infractions; training is necessary (through USA Swimming and/or YMCA, depending on the meet). There is always a demand for these volunteers. Training is technical but not lengthy or difficult.

PARENT COMMITTEES

At least one parent from each family is asked to volunteer and serve as a parent volunteer or on one committee. There are numerous jobs to be filled at swim meets and during the season for the swim team and volunteering is a great way to stay busy between your child's events. It also gets parents involved in the achievements of all team members and builds relationships with other parents in the swimming community. By sharing volunteer duties either at meets or with details for the season the Eastside YMCA parents contribute to a community of responsibility and support and they set a positive example for the swimmers. If you have extenuating circumstances that prevent you from volunteering, please contact the Head Coach.

PARENTS AT PRACTICE

Practice is time for swimmers and coaches to concentrate on improving the swimmers' technique, increasing speed and endurance, developing a strong coach-swimmer relationship, and fostering cooperation and unity within the group. Parents are permitted to observe practice. We ask that the parents stay in the stands and allow the coaches and swimmers to have uninterrupted time to develop these skills. Coaches do reserve the right to ask parents to leave if they are being a distraction or interrupt practice. If you have questions, please ask the coaches before or after practice and not during their time with swimmers. Please be respectful of the coaches' time. If there is an issue that needs to be addressed, please send it to the Head Coach via email and arrangements can be made for discussion.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION

If you or your swimmer have questions about mechanics or desire additional help with their training and preparation, consult with his/her group coach or with the Aquatics Director.

POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND

- Individual swimmers develop emotionally and athletically at different rates. This fact alone may cause stress for swimmers and external pressure cannot quicken or slow the pace of natural development. Excessive pressure can, however, contribute to burnout.

- Coaches, swimmers, and parents are human. Mistakes are inevitable. The most productive response is to admit them, excuse them, and move on. Grudges help no one.
- Let the coaches coach, let the swimmers swim, let the parents support.
- The process, not the awards, is the most valuable part of competitive swimming.

The friendships, lessons, skills, and memories gained from participating in the sport and the team last forever. They help create a healthy, happy, and strong person. As stated before, parents, swimmers, and coaches may not always agree but honest and open communication maintains mutual respect and a positive relationship.

FINANCIAL/PROGRAM FEES

There are many costs involved in operating the swim team. An allocation of the cost is covered by program fees. Below is a list of what is and is not covered by your program fees.

- **Covered:** Pool rental fees, team dues, coaches' wages, general operating costs, team caps and dual meets
- **Not Covered:** Team suit, goggles, any other training equipment, team clothing, special events including, invitationals and League Championship, YUSA District Championship, State Championship, and National Championship

REGISTRATION DUES:

One Swimmer

\$275 if paid in full upon registration

Payment Plan: \$300: \$100 due upon registration; \$50 on the 30th of the month for 4-months (October through January)

Two or More Swimmers per Family

\$250 per child if paid in full upon registration

Payment Plan: \$275: \$95 due upon registration; \$45 on the 30th of the month for 4-months (October through January)

High School Swimmers

\$125 paid in full upon registration and must submit swim coach verification

ALL SWIMMERS must be a member in good standing of the YMCA of Greater Erie for the duration of the season.

Financial Assistance

To apply, contact the membership director. Inquiries, the application process, and awards of assistance are kept confidential.

FUNDRAISING

The Eastside Family Y Swim Team requires families to participate in fundraising and/or volunteer activities. Both are necessary for the program to operate. Fundraising helps to pay for facility rental, and other team expenses that are not covered by the registration dues.

COMMUNICATION

Regular communication is essential for coaches, swimmers, and parents and several means of communication are used. The Narwhals Band App will be used most frequently. Please check each of these sources regularly and promptly contact the coaches or the aquatics director if you have questions, concerns, or information to share.

SWIMMER, PARENT, AND COACH

The relationship between swimmer, coach, and parent is an important aspect of swimming. To support the swimmer's development, it is important to maintain a mutually supportive partnership with regular communication. Swimmers, parents, and coaches may not always agree but respectful and open communication will help maintain a positive relationship. The collective goal of the swimmer-coach-parent triangle is the maintenance of an environment most conducive to the development of the swimmer - both as an athlete and as a person.

COMMUNICATING WITH COACHES:

Phone

The Eastside YMCA phone number is (814) 899-9622. The Aquatics Director or Coordinator is normally in the office between 9:00am-5:00pm most weekdays. NOTE: PLEASE DO NOT CALL COACHES AT HOME. Please respect their personal and family time by addressing issues during office hours or before/after practice.

Email

Parents are welcome to email coaches with questions, information, and ideas. Please address large issues or concerns in person with the appropriate staff member(s). The head coach may be reached by email. Please give a respectable time for a response back.

Meeting (formal or informal) with coaches

Coaches are usually available before or after practice time to answer quick questions. If you would like to address issues that require more time, please schedule an appointment with your child's coach or the Aquatics Director.

Electronic Communication Policy

YMCA of Greater Erie coaches and volunteers are not permitted to contact program participants by phone or electronically for any purpose other than transmitting program-specific information. Employees may not participate in social network communication with program participants. Please do not solicit such social or casual communication with Eastside YMCA coaching staff.

INFORMATION FOR SWIMMERS AND THEIR FAMILIES:

Email

Team information, events, and reminders are sent to families via e-mail. This is the primary means of communication. Please update any new contact information with an email to the Aquatics Director when necessary.

Eastside Essentials

- **BAND APP** – Information on team events, reminders, deadlines and a monthly calendar from the swim team coaches
- **Remind** - This is used for quick day of alerts to the swim team families that may be missed in an email or a post on the Band App
- **Eastside Y website** - www.ymcaerie.org/eastsideswimteam is a site used for most of the team management functions
- **Verbal** - Sometimes swimmers are given information verbally by coaches; regularly ask your swimmer about the information given verbally
- **Handouts** - Paper handouts may be given at practice and parent meetings for kids to take home with information on them. These handouts will always be information that is posted in other areas, they will just serve as an extra reminder for swimmers and their families.
- **Parent meetings** - Held once a month, these meetings allow coaches to convey information directly to parents regarding the team, the season, and the sport. Monthly calendars will also be handed out with practice and meet dates at these meetings. They also provide an open forum for parents to ask questions and address concerns.
- **Facebook** – The Eastside YMCA Swim Team has an official Facebook page – search and like 📱 eastsideymcaswimteam

GRIEVANCES

Most problems are rooted in simple misunderstandings or miscommunication and can be resolved quickly and easily. If allowed to fester, however, problems grow out of proportion and can be harmful to swimmers, parents, coaches, and the program. This can be prevented by addressing grievances immediately and with the appropriate person.

Contact: Practice Level Coach; When: An issue is group-specific, site-specific, or swimmer-specific or when there is a question or concern for a specific coach.

Contact: Aquatic Director; When: An issue concerns the overall swim team, financial or administrative concerns.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Swim practice continues when the weather is not so favorable. Pool closure is a facility decision, not a coach or team decision. Please call the YMCA front desk or email the head coach to inquire about the decision of practice for that day. Coaches will decide whether or not to cancel practice, or cut it short, based on the storm prediction and how much practice is left. In the event of snow or ice, a practice may be canceled depending on conditions. Please make sure we have a current phone number on file so that you get these messages. Swim Team practice cancellations will also be posted on the website and sent out in an email to all team families. Decisions are always made on the cautious side for these practices. Keep in mind - weather conditions in one location may not be the same elsewhere in the area. If there is a question, please call ahead. If parents are experiencing hazardous conditions (snow, ice, thunderstorm) while their children are at practice, Please come to the pool in case practice ends early. Be on the safe side. Use your best judgment.

ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET

Each spring the team has an awards dinner honoring the team's achievements during the previous year. Each practice level prepares a presentation summarizing its experience during the season. Graduating seniors receive special recognition as they complete their Eastside Family Y careers. Additional special awards are also given.

HEALTH

Swimming is an ideal sport to promote total health and fitness. Here is some basic information on health and nutrition to prevent injury and to help ensure improved performance in practice and meets.

All pools have safety rules posted. Please read and follow them. These standard pool safety rules always apply:

- Don't run
- Never swim alone; lifeguard must be on duty
- Swimmers are absolutely not allowed onto the pool deck without a coach being present during practice
- Look before you dive
- Never bring glass containers on a pool deck
- No horseplay anywhere

Other safety guidelines about swim practices and meets:

- Inform coaches of medical conditions, including allergies and prescription drugs
- Swimmers with asthma should always bring an inhaler and have it ready for use
- Swimmers should always bring and use a water bottle for practice and meets
- Wear proper shoes and clothing for outdoor activities
- Swim coaches are required to be trained in First Aid, CPR, and either Lifeguarding or Safety Training for Swim Coaches

INJURIES

Injuries incurred during practice, meets, or team activities will be treated immediately and parents will be notified. Sometimes swimmers experience pain that is not the result of a particular wound or accident. Muscle pain is common, especially as swimmers mature and their muscles develop further. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between soreness and injury. If pain restricts movement or lasts more than 3-4 days, swimmers should seek medical attention. Coaches are not doctors and can only give advice, not diagnosis or treatment. It is, however, important to keep coaches informed of injuries, treatments, and rehabilitation. As a reminder to our swimmers and parents. Stretching is a very important preventative to injury so if not taken seriously, it increases the chances of a swimmer being hurt.

ILLNESS

In case of illness, swimmers should let their bodies heal by restricting activity. It is also better to miss a practice or two than to expose many other team members and coaches to the same illness. Once recovered, swimmers can return to practice and work to regain their strength in the water. Health is always more important than practice.

SWIMMER'S EAR

Otitis Externa, commonly known as "swimmer's ear," is an infection of the skin in the ear canal. The dark, warm, wet environment of a swimmer's ear canal is a breeding ground for such an infection. To prevent the swimmer's ear, dry the ear well after each time in the water. Use a towel, Q-tip (carefully), or gently shake the head on its side. Commercial products aid in the prevention and treatment of swimmer's ears. A cheap and easy remedy is to make a solution of 50% rubbing alcohol and 50% white vinegar. A couple of drops in each ear will help kill some of the normal bacteria and will help dry out the ear. ** Alcohol or vinegar should not be put in the ears of children with PE tubes in their ears or holes in their eardrums. (Information borrowed from Dr. Raymond B. Coors, MD.)

SWIMMING CLASSIFICATIONS

The Eastside Family YMCA Swim Team competes in YMCA swimming meets only. There are USA swimming teams in our area; however, the Eastside Family YMCA team is not a USA swim team. These swimming bodies both provide competitive opportunities, but they are slightly different.

- League Rules and Regulations state that any USA swimmer must be unattached from their USA swimming team by October 1. If a swimmer competes with their USA swimming team and is attached after this date of October 1, they will not be allowed to compete in the league.
- YUSA: A swimmer may represent only his/her YMCA in closed or open competition for a period of at least 90 days prior to the first day of a YMCA championship meet; but YMCA leagues, states and regions have the right to further restrict such dual participation.

USA SWIMMING

USA Swimming is the national governing body for amateur competitive swimming. It sets rules for competitions, implements policies, conducts national championship meets, and selects athletes to represent the United States in international competitions. USA Swimming requires coaches and officials to be certified according to its standards. USA Swimming is divided into Local Swimming Committees (LSCs) which administer USA Swimming activities in smaller geographical areas. Our LSC is Middle Atlantic Swimming.

YMCA COMPETITIVE SWIMMING AND DIVING

YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving is unique in that it, like other Y sports programs, emphasizes the overall development of the athlete. It promotes not only physical achievement but also mental and spiritual growth. The National YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving Committee conducts the YMCA National Championship Meets and group representatives, district committees and leagues oversee local and regional competitions. Y coaches and officials are certified by Y standards. Y competitions include dual meets, invitational, and championship meets. Swimmers must compete in at least three YMCA meets during a season to be eligible for the league, regional, and national championship meets.

** To ensure that the team is adequately prepared for competition, all swimmers are encouraged to participate in as many practices as possible through the Eastside Family YMCA swim team. The high school swim team members must comply with all high school teams and regulations to compete.

AGE GROUP DISTINCTIONS

In both USA Swimming and YMCA meets, swimmers compete according to their ages. Those age groups include: 8 & under, 9/10, 11/12, 13/14, 15/16, 17/18. Some meets combine age groups, such as 10 & under, 15-18, Senior (13 & Over), or Open (any age). For USA Swimming and some YMCA invitational meets, swimmers compete in their age as of the first day of the meet. For most YMCA meets in our region, including dual meets; their age group is determined by their age as of Dec. 1 of the season start for short course meets.

TIME STANDARDS

USA Swimming establishes national motivational standards by which its meets are classified (B, BB, A, AA, etc.). These standards are based on a national average of performances over four years to allow swimmers to be grouped in competition with swimmers of the same general skill level. Many YMCA meets, including all dual meets, do not have time standards for participation. The YMCA does have qualifying times for the PA District meets and also YMCA Nationals. State qualification is based on district rank, and not by time.

GLOSSARY

- **"A" time (also AA- double-A, AAA- triple-A, AAAA- quad A):** Letters are used by USA Swimming to categorize times in each event and age group. These designations begin at "B" and progress to BB, A, AA, AAA, and AAAA.
- **Age group** - Swimmers are divided into groups by age. The age group designations for YMCA swimming are 6 & under, 8 & Under, 10 & Under, 11/12, 13/14, 15-18 (senior). For USA Swimming they are the same, except there is no 6 & under or 8 & Under. The terms "age group swimming" or "age group meet" refer mainly to groups and meets for 12 & Under swimmers (sometimes 14 & Under) in which swimmers are divided by age group.
- **Ascend** - To increase times or get slower as a swimmer progresses through a swim or a set.
- **"B" time (also "BB")** - see "A" time
- **Bulkhead** - A wall, usually moveable, used to divide a pool across the center.
- **Check-in** - Some meets require that swimmers check in for certain events, esp. distance events. Names are checked or initialed to verify that they will swim in those events.
- **Circle seeding** - A system where the fastest swimmers are placed in the middle lanes of the final three heats. The swimmer with the fastest entry time swims in the center lane of the last heat. The second fastest swims in the center lane of the next to last heat, etc.
- **Clerk of course** - In a designated area, this person or people arrange swimmers by heat and lane, give them each a card to take to their lane's timers, and send them behind the blocks to swim.
- **Championship/Consolation heat** - In a prelims-finals meet format, the top finishers in prelims (the number depends on the number of lanes in the pool) swim in the championship heat and the next fastest group of finishers (number depends on the number of lanes) from prelims swims in the consolation heat.
- **Cut** - Slang term for a qualifying time needed to swim in a particular meet.
- **Deck seeding** - Assigning swimmers to heat and lanes immediately before each event.
- **Descend** - Decrease time or get faster as a swimmer progresses through a swim or a set.
- **Disqualification/DQ** - A swim is nullified due to the swimmer committing an infraction of a rule. (Ex. kicking flutter kick on a butterfly or touching the wall with one hand on breaststroke).
- **Dolphin kick** - Kick used in butterfly and sometimes when pushing off the wall in freestyle and backstroke. Feet and legs are together and kick up and down in unison.
- **Drag/Drag suit** - Drag is resistance against a swimmer's movement. A drag suit creates extra drag with excess material to build strength and increase a swimmer's ability to combat extra resistance.

- **Drill** - an exercise focusing on a particular part of a stroke to improve the overall stroke technique.
- **Dryland training** - Exercises performed outside the pool to improve overall fitness and enhance swimming performance.
- **Dual meet** - A competition between two teams.
- **Event** - A particular swimming race - ex. 100 Freestyle, 200 Backstroke, 400 IM, etc.
- **False Start** - A swimmer moves forward or dives before the horn, beep, or gun is sounded to start a race. A swimmer is disqualified if she/he does this.
- **False Start Rope** - If a swimmer false starts, the starter sounds the horn, beep, or gun several times and this rope, across the center of the pool, is dropped to stop the swimmers.
- **Fast skin** - A type of suit made of a material that is meant to resist water and thus aid in the hydrodynamics of a swimmer who wears it. These suits are very expensive and their benefit remains the subject of debate in the world of competitive swimming.
- **Finals** - In a prelims-finals meet format, each event is contested twice. The top finishers (number determined by the number of lanes in the pool) in the preliminaries (the first time the event is contested) swim again in the finals. The order in which swimmers finish in finals determines their placement, points, and awards for each event.
- **FINA** - The international governing body for competitive swimming.
- **Flags/Backstroke flags** - A line of triangular flags strung across the pool, 15 ft. from each end of the pool in a short course yards pool and 5 meters from each end of the pool in a long course or short course meter pool. These signal to swimmers that they are nearing the end of the pool.
- **Flutter kick** - The kick used in freestyle and backstroke. The feet and legs move up and down alternately in short fast motions.
- **Group/Training Group/Practice Group** - Swimmers are organized into groups according to age, ability, and commitment.
- **Heat** - Events are divided into heat. In each heat, there is one swimmer in each lane swimming a particular event or race. The number of heats in each event depends on the number of competitors in each event.
- **Heat Sheet** - A listing of the swimmers in each event, divided into heats and lanes (indicating which swimmers swim in each heat and lane).
- **IMX** - USA Swimming program designed to motivate swimmers to compete in all strokes and longer distances of each stroke. Swimmers' times in the designated events are ranked nationally with all other swimmers in the respective age group.
- **Individual Medley/ IM** - An event in which each competitive stroke swims in this order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle. This competes in distances of 100 (1 length each stroke), 200 (2 lengths each stroke), or 400 (4 lengths each stroke).
- **Invitational Meet** - A meet involving more than 2 teams, sometimes lasting 2 or more days.

- **Juniors** - A slang term for USA Swimming Junior Championships or the time standards required for that meet.
- **J.O.s** - short for Junior Olympics, this is a nickname for the age group championship meet, held in the spring and the summer. A USA swim term.
- **Lane/lane ropes** - pools are divided into lanes - by lane ropes or a line of floating markers- so that swimmers may compete for side by side.
- **Long course** - a 50-meter pool; competitions in the summer are held in long course (50 meters) pools.
- **LSC** - Local Swimming Committee; United States Swimming's regional branches which oversee the conduct of meets and records, and rules under USS guidelines.
- **Lap counter** - Square plastic device with moveable numbers used by a person to count laps for a swimmer competing in an event 500 yards or longer.
- **Medley** - An event involving all four competitive strokes. An individual medley is swum by one person; a medley relay has 4 swimmers - one per stroke.
- **Meet Director** - Person who organizes and oversees the conduct of a meet.
- **Negative split** - swimming technique in which the swimmer swims the second half of a distance faster than the first.
- **NTV** - National Time Verification - A form issued by a verification official certifying that a national qualifying time was made by a swimmer.
- **Official** - A certified judge on the pool deck who enforces swimming rules.
- **Open** - About a meet or event, anyone may swim, regardless of age, and sometimes, time.
- **Pace clock** - A clock, either digital or with rotating hands-on a face, which counts seconds and minutes so that the swimmers may do interval training sets.
- **Preliminaries/Prelims** - In a prelims-finals meet format, the prelims session is when each event is first contested. All swimmers compete in their events in prelims; the top finishers in each event compete again in finals.
- **Pre-seeded** - Swimmers are assigned heats and lanes before the start of the meet.
- **Proof of Time** - A requirement at some meets, particularly championship meets, to prove that swimmers have legally met the time standards for the meet and have swum the times at which they are entered.
- **Psyche sheet** - A listing of entries for a meet, divided by event but not heats. These are subject to change as swimmers scratch events before the meet.
- **Qualifying time** - The minimum time needed to swim a particular event in a particular meet.
- **Referee** - The official who has authority over all the other officials at a meet. He/she makes final decisions and sees that a meet runs efficiently.
- **Relay** - Event in which four swimmers compete as a single team, one after another.
- **Re-seed** - Re-assigning swimmer to heats and lanes after a change occurs.
- **Ribbon writer** - Person, usually a parent volunteer, who writes names and times, or puts computer-generated labels on ribbons or medals to be awarded to swimmers.

- **Runner** - Person, usually a parent volunteer, who collects cards from timers after each heat is swum and takes them to the computer operator.
- **Sanction** - Official approval of a swim meet, given by either an LSC (for USA Swimming meets) or a YMCA field coordinator (for YMCA meets). To receive a sanction, a meet must be conducted according to the rules set forth by the body (YMCA or USA Swimming) issuing the sanction.
- **Scissors kick** - The feet begin apart and move straight toward and then past one another. This kick is illegal in breaststroke.
- **Scratch** - Removal of a swimmer from an event.
- **Seeding** - Placement of a swimmer in an event based on their entry time in that event.
- **Seniors** - All 13 & older swimmers are "senior" swimmers. In the YMCA program, this term commonly refers to the annual program for 13 & older swimmers. Also, it is a slang term for the USA Swimming National Championships.
- **Session** - A distinct portion of a meet, having its own warm-up time and slate of events to have swum.
- **Shave** - Swimmers shave the hair off their bodies before their focus meet to gain a fast feel in the water and thus a psychological boost for their swims. Shaving is not recommended for 12 & under swimmers.
- **Starter** - an official who starts each race by saying "Take your mark", then sounding a beep, horn, or firing a gun.
- **Starting blocks** - Platforms at the starting end of each lane, from which swimmers dive (or start in the water for backstroke) to begin each race.
- **Streamline** - Swimmer's body position used when starting or pushing off walls to reduce water resistance. The body is fully extended. Feet and legs are together with toes pointed. Arms are extended above the head with one hand on top of the other.
- **Taper** - Gradual reduction in yardage and intensity allowing the muscles to rest and recover for peak performance. Taper is effective for teenage swimmers whose muscles have developed to the point that they can "break down" during long periods of intense training. The taper also incorporates positive mental preparation for peak performance. Because taper has a strong effect on the body and mind, it is most effective as part of a training cycle and is incorporated into the season plan at intervals that allow for sufficient intense training between periods of taper.
- **Timed** finals - Meet format in which each event is only contested once (no prelims or finals).
- **Timer** - Person, usually a parent volunteer, who uses a stopwatch to time a swimmer in each heat and record the swimmer's time on a card.