



Team Manual

**P.O. Box 13849
Arlington, TX 76094
www.marswim.org
817-271-1537 (office)
817-274-9214 (fax)**

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	Pg 3
GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVE.....	Pg 3
MARS Mission	
Team Philosophy	
History	
PROFESSIONAL COACHING STAFF.....	Pg 3
Coaches' Responsibilities	
TEAM LEVELS.....	Pg 4
Training Sessions	
Practice and Attendance Policies	
Group Change Considerations	
Illness and Injury	
SWIMMERS' TRAINING RESPONSIBILITIES.....	Pg 8
Code of Conduct	
Honor Code	
PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES.....	Pg 9
Communication	
Addressing concerns with coaches	
TEAM MANAGEMENT AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION.....	Pg 10
Practice Group and Fees	
Team Fees and Participation	
Service Hours Commitment	
Fundraising Commitment	
Withdrawal Notice	
ABC's OF SWIMMING	Pg 13
Competitive Strokes	
Swim Seasons	
Meet Information and Scheduling	
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Honor Code	Pg 14
Appendix B: Locker Room Monitoring Policy	Pg 15
Appendix C: Anti-Bullying Policy	Pg 16
Appendix D: Whistle Blower Protection Policy	Pg 19
Appendix E: Team Travel Policy	Pg 21
Appendix F: Electronic Communication Policy	Pg 22
Appendix G: Parent Pledge of Conduct	Pg 24

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to explain to MARS members about their child's program and the policies and procedures that affect all swimmers and parents, year after year. It should be read by all families so that they may become familiar with important facts and policies of the club.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVE

MARS Swimming is known throughout the state as a first-class, year-round swim program. We offer a guided age-group youth program for children age 5 and up, from the novice swimmer to the most competitive and skilled athlete. When a young person becomes a member of the MARS team, he/she learns the values of sportsmanship and teamwork while working to achieve their competitive excellence. Swimming in the MARS program provides physical, emotional and intellectual skills that will last a lifetime.

MARS Swimming strives to generate an avenue of excellence for athletes, assuring success in swimming and life while supporting a healthy, safe, and positive environment.

MARS Core Values: Competitive Excellence, Diversity, Accountability, Respect, and Leadership.

HISTORY

MARS Swimming, LLC is a result of the 1997 merger of Swim Team Arlington (STAR) and Mid-Cities Swim Team (MCST). STAR began as Tarrant County Aquatic Team (TCAT); over time, TCAT evolved to AIR (Arlington Irving Swimming) and ultimately to STAR. MCST was founded to serve the communities of the Dallas-Fort Worth mid-cities of Hurst, Euless and Bedford. Both clubs' primary purposes at the time they were formed were to develop age group swimming and prepare swimmers for the area's high school teams. These remain the club's major purposes today. However, the club goals today include establishing a comprehensive competitive program for our communities. MARS has not only become recognized as one of North Texas's finest programs, but we also participate at the state and national level by virtue of our age-group champions, Junior National Finalists, National finalists, and Olympic Trials finalists.

COMMUNITY EFFORTS

MARS is a leader in our community by providing assistance, both financial and otherwise, to those families that need assistance. MARS families are ambassadors for the team and can frequently be seen volunteering throughout the community in a variety of ways. The MARS Foundation is a non-profit foundation that provides financial assistance to those unable to afford learn-to-swim lessons or team registration. MARS is recognized as one of the first local partners of USA Swimming's Make-A-Splash national initiative, providing swim lessons and water safety instruction to the community. MARS remains committed to ensuring all families have access to quality instruction.

Year-round athletes pay an annual USA Swimming registration fee of \$100 (for 2024). Athletes receive both liability and supplemental medical insurance coverage.

MARS is a club member of USA Swimming and pays a national fee annually. Membership benefits include USA Swimming Rules and Regulations, membership certificate and certificate of insurance. Clubs joining USA Swimming have liability insurance coverage for approved insured activities.

COACHES RESPONSIBILITIES

The coaches' job is to supervise the entire competitive swim program. The MARS coaching staff is dedicated to providing a program for youngsters that will enable them to learn the value of striving to improve oneself—"to be the best you can be." Therefore, the coaches must be in total control in matters affecting training and competition.

1. The coaches are responsible for placing swimmers in practice groups. This is based on the age and ability level of each individual. When it is in the best interest of a swimmer, he/she will be placed in a more challenging training group by the coach.
2. Sole responsibility for stroke instruction and the training regimen rests with the MARS coaching staff.

Each group's practices are based on sound scientific principles and are geared to the specific goals of that group.

3. The coaching staff will make the final decision concerning which meets MARS swimmers may attend. The coaching staff also makes the final decision concerning which events a swimmer swims.
4. At meets, the coaching staff will conduct and supervise warm-up procedures for the team. After each race, the coaches will offer constructive criticism regarding the swimmers performance. (It is the parent's job to offer love and understanding regardless of their youngster's performance)
5. The building of a relay team is the sole responsibility of the coaching staff.

The coaching staff is constantly updating and improving the MARS program. It is the swimmers' and parents' responsibility to make the most out of the excellent opportunity this program provides for success in swimming.

PRACTICE AND ATTENDANCE POLICIES

The following guidelines are to inform parents and swimmers of the coaches' policies regarding practice. These policies have been developed over many years and are designed to provide the best possible practice environment for all.

1. Each training group has specific attendance requirements appropriate for the objectives of that group. Generally, the least possible interruption in the training schedule will produce the greatest amount of success. However, the club does encourage younger swimmers to participate in other activities in addition to swimming. The expectation level from the coaches to attend practices increases as swimmers move to higher groups.
2. For the swimmers protection, they should arrive at the pool no earlier than 15 minutes prior to their workout time. Swimmers should be picked up at the end of each class, but no later than 10 minutes after their practice is over. Swimmers should be ready to swim five minutes prior to the start of their practice.
3. In case a youngster is late for practice, it is our hope that the parents will send an email or text to the coach explaining the reason for tardiness.
4. Plan to stay the entire practice. The last part of practice is very often the most important. Announcements are made at the end of each practice. In the event that your child needs to be dismissed early from practice, a note from the parent for each dismissal is requested.
5. Occasionally, most of a practice group may be attending a meet, in which case practice will be canceled. In the days preceding a group's championship meet the practice may finish early to help the swimmers prepare physiologically for the meet.
6. Swimmers are to enter the building and go directly to the pool area. Swimmers that are found in any other part of the building(s) could damage our relationship with the pool management and may face disciplinary action.
7. While on school grounds, the swimmers are the responsibility of the coaching staff. During practice sessions, swimmers are never to leave the pool area without the coach's permission.
8. The club has an obligation to act as guests while in the pool facilities (both swimmers and parents). Every member of the club needs to do everything possible to respect this privilege. Any damages to host property may result in financial liability of the swimmer's parents. Any damage may also result in the swimmer being asked to leave the team permanently.
9. Parents are not allowed on the pool deck during practice unless it is an emergency.
10. Parents are allowed to observe practice from the bleachers at each location.
11. Please be considerate and keep conversations at a low volume level. Do not try to communicate with any swimmer from the seating area. This is distracting to the swimmer and staff.

LEARN TO SWIM LESSONS

Learn-to-Swim Lessons: This program is strictly learning to swim with a goal of preparing the swimmers to join Race Ready groups after completing Level 3. Classes are held once per week for four weeks (4 classes). All classes are 30 minutes per day. These swimmers are typically the youngest on our team, beginning at age 5, but there is no upper age limit. Instructors focus on swim mechanics, safety and fun.

Private Lessons: These lessons are individually designed to meet the needs of the participant. The first few minutes of each session, the instructor will assess the current skills of the participant and then train them based on the appropriate level of swimming ability. Adults and children, ages 4 and up, are welcome.

PRE-TEAM LEVELS

These groups are designed for swimmers who are comfortable in the water, demonstrating freestyle but need more instruction with the basics of the competitive strokes. Most often swimmers in these groups will need multiple sessions of each of these classes as they are not only learning the swimming skills but also building swimming endurance.

Race Ready Groups

Race Ready Minnows (RR 1) - This class for swimmers who possess basic water safety skills and can swim on top of the water to the backstroke flags unassisted (about 10 strokes), not be afraid of deep water, and take instruction independently. We use a progressive curriculum to develop basic swimming skills for freestyle, backstroke, and breaststroke kick. This class is designed to ready the swimmer to move to Race Ready 2 where they are proficient in swimming 25 yards unassisted demonstrating freestyle and backstroke.

Race Ready Sharks (RR 2) - This class for swimmers who possess basic water safety skills and can swim 25 yards unassisted - demonstrating freestyle and backstroke, not be afraid of deep water, and take instruction independently. We use a progressive curriculum to further develop swimming skills for freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly kick, and streamline. This class is designed to ready the swimmer to move to the Pre Competitive team.

- Test set to move into PreComp: Demonstrate 50 yards freestyle, 25 yards backstroke, 25 yards breaststroke or 25 yards butterfly

TEAM LEVELS

MARS uses a progressive age group program designed to develop the child physically, mentally, and emotionally in a systematic fashion. A well-defined, long-term approach of gradually increasing degrees of commitment is essential to reach peak performance levels. The emphasis in the early stages of participation must be placed on developing technical skills and a love for the sport. In the later years, more emphasis is put on training the athlete for the rigors of competitive swimming. Training sets are always designed with the needs and abilities of the swimmers in mind.

Pre-Competitive: At this level, swimmers are beginning to train as a competitive swimmer. The curriculum is designed to continue the development of the fundamentals for freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and starts and turns. Emphasis is entirely on developing proper stroke and start techniques and understanding competitive swimming terms. Swimmers in PreComp groups practice 3 days per week for 40 minutes. Athletes are expected to maintain at least 60% attendance in this group. Swimmers should be attending intrasquad meets.

Bronze: Swimmers work on the four competitive strokes, starts and turns. Swimmers are introduced to developing endurance and learning how to complete repeats, based upon ability, using a pace clock, and beginning to understand time standards. Swimmers practice 4 days per week for 45 minutes; athletes are expected to maintain at least 75% attendance in this group. Bronze Group swimmers typically attend BB/B/C level meets and some intrasquad meets. Swimmers in this group should be striving for 3 or more B/BB times. Swimmers are expected to have 75% meet attendance for the short and long course seasons.

Silver: Swimmers have increased emphasis on technique, swim mechanics and racing strategies, and are beginning to understand the fitness aspect to training and importance of dryland training. Swimmers practice 5 days per week for 60 minutes. Athletes are expected to maintain at least 80% practice attendance in. Swimmers in this group are expected to attend all meets they are qualified for short course and long course seasons. Typically, swimmers in this group attend A/BB & some B/C meets. The goal for swimmers in the Silver group is to attain 3 or more A/BB times and have times for all distances for 500yd/400m and below to prepare them for the next group.

Gold: This competitive group is composed with an intermediate competitive swimming background having several BB times. Swimmers continue to put emphasis on stroke, starts, and turns mechanics. The fitness component of competitive training is emphasized and swimmers train for speed. Swimmers practice 6 days a week for 75 minutes. Athletes in this group are expected to maintain at least 85% practice attendance. Swimmers in this group are expected to attend all meets they qualify for short course and long course seasons. The goal for swimmers is to strive for 5 or more A times and have times for all distances 1000yd/800m and below under to prepare them for the next group.

Age Group 2: This is a highly competitive group with an advanced competitive swim background. While there is still a large emphasis on stroke mechanics, swimmers in this group begin to understand the physiology of training and how training affects their performance. There is a large emphasis on stroke mechanics, but training sessions are rigorous focusing on speed and power. Dryland conditioning will also be utilized to introduce growth in specific muscle groups to enhance progress and strength. Swimmers train 6 days per week for 105 minutes. Athletes in this group are expected to maintain at least 90% attendance and are expected to attend all meets they are qualified for short course and long course seasons. The goal for swimmers is to attain AA times or better (in the 13-14 age group) in multiple stroke events and distances.

Pre-Senior Team: These swimmers are experienced athletes. They have shown a commitment to competitive swimming and attend all meets in which their coach deems they are qualified. Swimmers in this group train 6 times per week for 120 minutes, plus dryland training. Athletes are expected to maintain at least 95% attendance. The goal for PreSenior athletes is to achieve Sectional Cuts in 2 or more events while competing in multiple stroke events and distances.

Senior Team: This group of athletes belong to one of the highest level within the MARS program. Swimmers in this group have been in the sport for several years and compete regular at the state and national level. Most of the swimmers also represent their local high school concurrently. Most of these swimmers are looking towards scholarship opportunities at universities and colleges. Athletes train 6 days a week for 120 minutes, plus have dry land regimen. These swimmers are expected to have 95% attendance; they must maintain a very high standard of training volume and competition. This program is designed to ready the swimmer for the rigors of collegiate swimming.

National Team: This is our elite team. These athletes have committed themselves completely to the sport and compete at the National level within USA Swimming. National Team athletes train 4-6 hours per day, 6 days per week. They are ambassadors for our team and sport. It takes many years of work and dedication to be a part of the National Team.

GROUP CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS

Coaches take very seriously the timing of progression from one group to the next within the team. There are several factors involved in this decision; none of these are social factors. The final decision always lies with the coaching staff.

Ability to Train – The consistent ability to hold repeat times and intervals in all aspects (swimming, kicking, etc.) is the primary consideration for promotion. The swimmer must demonstrate they will be able to handle the training load of the next practice group before they are promoted. This is important for the self-image of the child. We won't put a child into a situation where they may be "over their head". We will always be sure that the swimmer is ready for promotion, both physically and psychologically.

Attendance – This factor shows the swimmer's ability or desire to handle the level of dedication required to be in

the next level. Each level has more stringent attendance levels associated with it.

Attitude – Is the swimmer “ready” for the challenges of the next level? Can they handle difficult situations and learn to deal with them?

Stroke Mechanics – Does the swimmer have the level of mastery of their strokes to warrant promotion?

Competition level – This is probably the least important factor in the decision to promote a swimmer. Our training groups are designed for training, not meets.

The following is an outline of the expectations from each of our training groups. Coaches will use these expectations as a guide to determine promotion to the next group. For example, to move into Gold the test set is listed under the Gold group. **These are only guidelines. The final decision lies with the coaching staff.**

National Team

- Achieve one or more USAS National time standards (Futures, Jr National, US Open, etc)
- 95%+ attendance requirement
- Required to attend team travel trips (National meets & Camps)

Senior Team

- Achieve one or more USAS Sectional time standard, or other regional-level time standard
- 95% attendance requirement
- Attendance is required at all meets unless absence is approved by coach.
- Senior Team swimmers are MARS “ambassadors” and are expected to be present at most team functions as either participants or to assist the staff.
- Test set to move in: 5 x 200 FR @ 2:45, 16 x 50 kick @ :45, 8 x 200IM @ 2:45

Pre-Senior Team

- Goal is to achieve “AA” times or better (in the 13-14 age group) in multiple stroke events and distance.
- 95% attendance requirement
- Attendance is required at all meets unless absence is approved by coach.
- Test set to move in: 8 x 100 FR @ 1:10, 10 x 50 kick @ :50, 8 x 200IM @ 3:00

Age Group 2

- 90% attendance requirement
- Test set to move in: 8 x 100 FR @ 1:20, 10 x 50 kick @ :55, 4 x 200IM @ 3:15
- Attendance required at all meets unless absence is approved by coach

Gold

- 85% attendance requirement
- Attendance required at all meets unless absence is approved by coach
- Test set to move in: 6 x 100 FR @ 1:30, 4 x 100 non-FR @ 1:50, 8 x 50 kick @ 1:00, 3 x 200IM @ 3:45

Silver

- 80% attendance requirement
- Commitment to meet attendance for all eligible swim meets
- Test set to move in: 4 x 100 FR @2:00, 9 x 50 IM no free (FL, BK, BR...repeat) @ 1:20, 10 x 25 kick @ :45, 4 x 100 IM @ 2:30

Bronze

- 75% attendance requirement
- 75% swim meet attendance for each season
- Ability to perform the confidently on a repeated basis
- Basic understanding of clock use for swim sets
- Test set to move in: 4 x 50 FR repeat with flip turns, demonstrate rhythmic breathing on freestyle, legal 50 backstroke with turn, legal 25 yd breaststroke, and legal 25 butterfly

Pre-Competitive

- 60% attendance requirement
- Attend intrasquad swim meets
- Test set to move in: Demonstrate 50 yards freestyle, 25 yards backstroke, 25 yards breaststroke or 25 yards butterfly

ILLNESS AND INJURY

Whenever possible, the coach should be informed in advance of an illness or injury. If your swimmer will be out of the water over a long period with an injury or illness, please notify MARS at so the coaching staff is aware of the problem. Long-term medical issues need also to be addressed with the team office. It is the parents' responsibility to notify the office of an extended absence due to a medical issue.

In the event of a long-term illness or injury that prevents the swimmer from participating in training, parents should notify the office as soon as possible so that the swimmer's account may be immediately suspended. The normal team policies regarding withdrawal or leave of absence typically do not apply in these types of cases.

SWIMMER'S TRAINING RESPONSIBILITIES

As a swimmer's level of swimming ability increases, so does his/her responsibility. The program is designed to encourage all swimmers to advance to the next level. As swimmers improve and advance, there is a deep commitment requiring a great effort from all. A swimmer has responsibilities to the team, the coach, his/her parents, and most importantly to themselves. Swimmers need to prepare themselves for a 100% effort each time they come to practice.

Swimmers will be required to bring specified training accessories (i.e., caps, goggles, fins, etc.) to workouts. Each swimmer is responsible for ensuring these items are properly adjusted and that spares are readily available. Equipment adjustment and repair is not accepted as an excuse to miss part of a training session.

CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Any swimmer who is known to use alcohol, drugs, or tobacco is subject to suspension or dismissal from the team.
2. Never interfere with the progress of another swimmer, during practice or otherwise.
3. At all club functions, whether practice, meets, or social gatherings, we expect each swimmer's conduct to reflect positively on the team.
4. All members of the club, whether parents or swimmers, protect and improve the excellent reputation the club has throughout the swimming community.
5. All Pre-Senior and Senior team members and other swimmers traveling without parents will be required to sign the "Honor Code". A copy of this is given in Appendix B for parents and swimmers to sign and return to the coach.

PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Please make every effort to have your swimmers at practice on time. Realize that your child is working hard and give all the support you can. Encourage good diet and sleeping habits. They will serve your children well.

MARS has a reputation of hosting swim meets of the highest caliber. A portion of our operating budget is generated from these swim meets each year. One of the commitments made when you join MARS was to help work our own swim meets. We normally host four to seven swim meets per year.

COMMUNICATION

The primary means of communication on the team is via e-mail. Nearly all team information is available to MARS members via the team website (marswim.org). Families can access all account information, make payments, enter into swim meets, and find the team calendar. Families should enroll themselves via the link on the MARS team website.

The MARS team website is maintained as an additional information point and should be reviewed periodically by all members.

Families are also encouraged to join the various social media groups that MARS belongs to.

Coach Contact — When contacting the coaches, please be considerate. Please avoid approaching a coach while they are on deck during a practice; the best way to speak with the coaches is to meet them after practice. They usually make themselves available for 10 minutes to answer questions, provide information, etc. Sending a note to the coach with your swimmer is a good way to get information to them or let them know you would like to talk to them.

Another method is to contact the coach via e-mail. E-mail addresses for the coaching staff are available on the MARS website.

PROBLEMS WITH THE COACH?

One of the traditional swim team communication gaps is that some parents seem to feel more comfortable in discussing their disagreements over coaching philosophy with other parents rather than taking them directly to the coach. Not only is the problem never resolved that way, but in fact this approach often results in new problems being created. Listed below are some guidelines for a parent raising some difficult issues with a coach:

1. Try to keep foremost in your mind that you and the coach have the best interests of your child at heart. If you trust that the coach's goals match yours, although his/her approach may be different, you are more likely to enjoy good rapport and a constructive dialogue.
2. 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 the number of athletes. On occasion, an individual child's interest may need to be subordinate to the interests of the group, but over the long run the benefits of membership in the group compensate for occasional short term inconvenience.
3. If your child swims for an assistant coach always discuss the matter first with that coach, following the same guidelines and preconceptions noted above. If the assistant coach cannot satisfactorily resolve your concern, then ask that the head age group coach or head coach join the dialogue as a third party.
4. If another parent uses you as a sounding board for complaints about the coach's performance or policies, listen empathetically, but encourage the other parent to speak directly to the coach. He or she is the only one who can resolve the problem.

TEAM MANAGEMENT AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Mid-Cities Arlington Swimming, LLC is a limited liability corporation, registered in the state of Texas.

PRACTICE GROUPS & FEES (rev 7/2024)

Learn-to-Swim	\$100 FOR 4 LESSONS
Race Ready	\$100 PER MONTH
Pre-Competitive	\$125 PER MONTH
Bronze	\$155 PER MONTH
Silver	\$167 PER MONTH
Gold	\$181 PER MONTH
*Age Group II	\$209 PER MONTH
*Pre-Senior Group	\$223 PER MONTH
*Seniors/National Team	\$251 PER MONTH

* All swimmers in AG2 and above will be charged "Long Course" tuition for additional pool time. Long Course tuition is \$75 (split \$25 in each of June, July and August) for the season for AG2, P/S, Senior and National Groups. The Long Course tuition fee is for the additional morning practices for these groups. **Swimmers in these groups are charged for the long course fee regardless of attendance at the additional practices.**

TEAM FEES AND FAMILY PARTICIPATION

(A) MARS REGISTRATION: A \$250 annual team registration fee is due at the time of joining of the team for all new families. Renewing families will pay \$150. Swimmers receive a team swimsuit, t-shirt and cap following registration. The team registration fee is non-refundable.

(B) USA SWIMMING REGISTRATION: Each athlete must also pay annually to register with swimming's governing body (\$100 for 2024). MARS does not retain any of this fee and paid directly to USA Swimming. This fee includes insurance, newsletters and access to USA Swimming programs. The USAS registration fee is transferable to another USAS team, but non-refundable.

(C) ENTRY FEES: Entry fees are charged to each swimmer's account at the time the fees are sent to the host team. The average entry fees for area meets are approximately \$6.00 (\$10 for long course) per event. At most meets, swimmers can swim up to five events per day. The North Texas LSC also charges each swimmer a \$3 surcharge at each meet entered. **Entry fees are not refundable, even if the swimmer does not attend the event.**

(D) FUNDRAISING: The team will participate in two fundraisers per year (Spring and Fall). Participation in these fundraisers is required for each family. Fundraising efforts goes to several areas within the team including equipment, coaches' and officials' professional fees and education, and other periodic expenditures not covered by the cost of tuition. Families are required to fundraise a minimum of \$200 per year with the following guidelines:

A minimum of \$100 for the spring fundraiser and minimum of \$100 for the fall fundraiser will be required for each family. If a family chooses to raise a minimum of \$200 for the spring fundraiser, their fundraising commitment will be met for the year.

If a family chooses not to participate in each fundraiser or does not meet the \$100 minimum requirement at each Spring and Fall fundraisers, the account will be billed \$100 or the balance of the money raised to total \$100 after the completion of each fundraiser, or upon withdrawal from the team, whichever comes first.

If a family leaves before a fundraiser, the family is still responsible for the fundraising commitment and the account will be charged based on the date the family leaves.

(E) MONTHLY DUES: You will be billed for monthly tuition on the 1st of each month for the month's classes. Invoices are sent out via email on the 1st of the month and charged to the credit /debit card on file in their account. Tuition is due on or before the 5th of the month, and are considered late after the 7th of the month. Late fees are \$20. For example – April tuition is charged and invoice sent via email on April 1st. April tuition is due April 1st,

late after April 7th. Each family's financial information and payment options are handled through the MARS website.

In addition, each new swimmer's account will be charged a tuition deposit (\$125) on the second month, following their registration. The tuition deposit is a one-time fee, not an annual fee, to be used for tuition in the last month of a swimmer's tenure with the team, following receipt of a 30-day notice of withdrawal. Each year on September 1, there will be a minimum of a 3% increase in monthly tuition.

(F) SERVICE HOUR COMMITMENT: Family participation is necessary to ensure the continued success of the team. Throughout you and your family's association with MARS, we ask you to support the team during our hosted events.

It is the expectation that if your child is swimming in a MARS meet, then you should volunteer at least one session. If your child is eligible to be racing at the MARS swim meet, your child cannot volunteer because your child should be competing. Families that regularly do not help with MARS meets, their child may not be eligible to compete in the swim meet.

Service hours are required by all MARS families in the Bronze, Silver, Gold, AG2, Pre-Senior, Senior, and National groups. Every family is required to complete half of their service hours by June 30 and the other half between July 1 - December 31st. The number of annual service hours varies slightly from year to year based upon the projected needs of the team and volunteer opportunities for the year. This requirement is per MARS family, not individual swimmer. Hours can be earned by any person representing a MARS family (relative, friend, etc.), but can only be earned at MARS hosted events. **The required minimum number of service hours for 2024 is 22, 11 hours must be earned from January 1 through June 30 and 11 hours must be earned from July 1 through December 31.**

If a family chooses not to support the team by volunteering their time or does not fulfill the required minimum 11 hours from January 1 through June 30, the account will be charged \$25 per hour unfulfilled during this time. If a family chooses not to support the team by volunteering their time or does not fulfill the required minimum 11 hours from July 1 through December 31, the account will be charged \$25 per hour unfulfilled during this time.

Joining mid-season and withdrawals: Families that join the team during the middle of the year will be responsible for a pro-rated number of points based upon the date they join. If a family chooses not to earn service hours for each time period (January 1 - June 30 and July 1 - December 30), their account will be billed for unearned service hours, \$25 per hour unearned, at the end of time period (11 hours each time period) or upon withdrawal from the team, whichever comes first. For example, if a family withdraws April 30 and has 0 hours fulfilled on their account, the account will be charged 11 hrs x \$25/hr, totaling \$275.

Service Hours do not rollover from year to year and hours are based on the need of the swim meet, not the total number of hours volunteered. Service Parents must also sign in during events where points are offered in order to receive credit. If a parent signs up for a job, service, food or other volunteer opportunity and then fails to provide these services without reasonable notice to the team, their account will be charged for the hours associated with this opportunity at \$25 per hour. Service hours may only be earned at MARS sponsored events. **Working as a timer, or other volunteer, at a non-MARS event does not count towards a family's obligation with our team.**

(G) SWIMSUIT AND EQUIPMENT POLICY: MARS is a Speedo sponsored team. As such, it is our responsibility to support the Speedo brand in as many ways as possible. We have selected the **Speedo Vortex Maze in red/white/blue as our competition suit.** These suits are designed to fit tight and to be worn at Swim Meets only. MARS caps must be worn by all swimmers at meets.

Meet suits, practice suits, caps, goggles, swim bags and other swimming equipment can be purchased through our local Speedo distributor, D&J Sports. D&J Sports would be more than happy to assist you with sizing and shipping information. The MARS website has a special link to a "MARS Store" at D&J Sports. The physical location of D&J Sports is:

**D&J Sports INC.
3060 B Stemmons Freeway
Dallas, Texas 75247**

(H) WITHDRAWING MEMBERSHIP: There is a 30 day notice of withdrawal from the team required of all swimmers. All Parents need to advise the MARS office in writing concerning withdrawal. The withdrawal notice can be sent via the P.O. Box or via email (officemanager@marswim.org). A swimmer's tuition deposit, paid when they joined the team, will act as the final month's tuition, following receipt of a written 30-day notice. All accounts will be charged any outstanding fees at the time of withdrawal, including fundraising, service hours, and meet entry fees. Withdrawals must be received before the 1st of the month. For example, families wishing to withdraw their swimmer by May 31st must send a written notification and be received by the office before April 1st. All unpaid balances will be reflected on the account's final invoice and full payment must be made prior to an account being inactivated.

(I) REJOINING THE TEAM: If your swimmer plans to rejoin MARS after a leave of absence they will need to rejoin as a new member and new registration fees paid (MARS registration is required; USAS registration is required if not current).

(J) REGISTRATION: MARS uses an online registration program to make registering easier. The program is very easy to use and only has a few steps. Online registering also has the added benefit of allowing you to pay with a credit card or by check. All families must register online to join the team. For your security, the MARS office does not have the ability to manage or cancel your credit/debit card, for your security.

ABC's OF SWIMMING

Swim Seasons

The swim year is divided into two seasons. The winter, or “short course”, season runs from mid-September to mid-March. The meets are held in a 25-yard pool. The summer, or “long course”, season runs from early April to mid-August. Meets are generally held in 50-meter pools (Olympic size). Some 50m pools are indoor, others are outdoor.

SHORT COURSE - MARS trains at multiple locations during the short course season. UTA, GCISD Swim Center, and Nolan Catholic HS; all have indoor 25 yard pools. Pre-Competitive through Senior teams have been established at each pool and they practice at their “home pool”. MARS rents these spaces at considerable expense to the team. We are fortunate to have facilities like these available to accommodate the large size of the team and to have alternate locations if one pool is temporarily closed for a maintenance issue.

LONG COURSE - Starting each spring the Senior, Pre-Senior and AG2 teams train at the 50-meter pool outdoor pools located at The University of Texas at Arlington and the Lewisville Westside Aquatic Center. Senior and Pre-Senior swimmers train each morning, Monday - Friday. AG2 swimmers also train 5 mornings per week (M-F), with an altered afternoon schedule. In the afternoons all swimmers train at their “home pools”. Long course training is very important to swimmers in these groups. All of the swim meets for this level swimmer are at long course pools during the summer season. Long course practice time is designed to supplement the swimmers’ afternoon training, not replace it. All swimmers in AG2 and above will be charged “Long Course” tuition for the additional pool time.

Levels of Achievement

There are seven different age group classifications recognized by USA Swimming: 10-Under, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16, and Senior. The Senior classification includes any age registered swimmer who has achieved the prescribed qualifying time for an event. Not all age group classifications are offered at every swim meet. The swimmers age on the first day of a meet will govern the swimmers age for the entire meet.

Within each age group there are different nationally recognized levels of achievement based on times. All swimmers begin as “C” swimmers. As they improve, they advance from “C”, to “B”, “BB”, “A”, “AA”, “AAA”, and ultimately “AAAA”. The times required for each ability level are published each quadrennium (four-year cycles based on Olympic years) by USA Swimming. This permits fair, yet challenging, competition on all levels.

In many cases, a swimmer may be in a different class in each stroke. An example: a “C” breaststroke time, a “B” freestyle time, and a “BB” backstroke time. It is therefore possible, that a single swimmer may be eligible to compete at different level meets in the same season. A swimmer’s coach will determine which level, or both, the swimmer should attend. All meet entry decisions are made by a swimmer’s coach.

Some swim meets set certain qualification standards for entry. In order to swim in a certain classification, a swimmer must have achieved the qualifying time for that particular classification.

Meet Information and Scheduling

Each season’s meet schedule and individual meet information can be found on the North Texas website (www.ntswwim.org). You will also find this same information on our team website.

The meet schedule has been established with the expectation that swimmers will attend every meet available at their classification level. In other words, an Age Group swimmer with “A” times should participate in all “A” level meets; swimmers with “BB” times should participate in all “BB” level meets, etc. The meet information a meet host provides gives each meet eligibility criteria.

On an average, we want all Age Group swimmers and above to compete once every three or four weeks. The meet schedule and training schedule is established with this philosophy in mind.

The coaching staff reserves the right to make the final decision concerning meets MARS swimmers may attend. MARS generally competes in all meets in which we are eligible to compete in our LSC.

Appendix A: HONOR CODE

The following code is in effect throughout the year. Some of the items refer specifically to team travel. Additionally, anyone who, in the opinion of the coach or coaches, acts in a manner that would interfere with the travel objectives listed below, will be subject to immediate return home (at the expense of the parent and/or swimmer) and other punishments including barring from future travel meets or other competition or dismissal from the team.

1. MARS may travel as a team to these meets and everyone is expected to behave in an exemplary manner. The reputation of MARS is dependent on the swimmer's behavior.
2. The coaching staff holds the final word on any rules, regulations, or disciplinary action.
3. The consumption or purchase of alcohol, smoking or chewing tobacco, or use of any other illegal drug or substance of any kind will not be allowed. In addition, any team member found or suspected to be in the presence of others, regardless of team affiliation, partaking in any of the above activities will be subject to the same punishments and probable expulsion from MARS. Any swimmer suspected of such activity will appear before a review committee composed of the head coach, the head age group coach, and an athlete representative.
4. At no times will male and female athletes be in the same room together with the door closed. This applies to MARS members or members of any other team.
5. No team meetings may be missed. Be punctual to all meetings and warm-up times.
6. No team member may be out of their room after the assigned bed time. Permission must be obtained from the coach to leave the room past this time.
7. Any damages or thievery incurred at a motel will be at the expense of the swimmers assigned to that room, and further disciplinary action will be taken. No loud or boisterous behavior will be tolerated in the hallways or public areas, and such behavior should be kept to a minimum in your rooms. Make all long distance calls on a credit card or collect.
8. All team members will be polite in restaurants. If there has been a problem with the service, see the coach. All team members are expected to attend all team functions.
9. Failure to comply with the Honor Code as set forth in this document may result in disciplinary action. Such discipline may include, but may not be limited to:
 - i. Dismissal from the trip and immediate return home at the athlete's expense;
 - ii. Disqualification from one or more events, or all events of competition;
 - iii. Disqualification from future team travel meets;
 - iv. Financial penalties;
 - v. Dismissal from the team; and/or
 - vi. Proceedings for a LSC or USA Swimming National Board of Review.
10. Swimmers are to refrain from inappropriate physical contact at team activities and events.
11. Swimmers are to refrain from use of inappropriate language.
12. Agree to follow the rules about practice and meet behavior in the team handbook.

I recognize my responsibility to abide by the rules and requirements of the Mid-Cities Arlington Swimming (MARS Swimming) I am representing and I acknowledge that I have received and read such.

Swimmer (print) _____ (signature) _____
Dated _____

Parent (print) _____ (signature) _____
Dated _____

Appendix B: MARS Locker Room Monitoring Policy

PURPOSE

The following guidelines are designed to maintain personal privacy as well as to reduce the risk of misconduct in locker rooms and changing areas.

FACILITIES

The following is a description of our practice and competition facilities to allow athletes and their families to plan their use.

We practice at: University of Texas at Arlington, Grapevine-Colleyville Swim Center, LISD Westside Aquatic Center, and Nolan Catholic HS.

Location Descriptions: Each location has separate male and female locker rooms. Entrances to these lockers rooms (except UTA) is from the pool deck. At UTA, the locker room entrances are within a few meters from the indoor pool entrance. UTA is an open campuses. Adult students, staff and faculty have access to the locker rooms during the MARS practice times.

MONITORING

Coaches and staff make every effort to recognize when an athlete goes to the locker room or changing area during practice and competition and, if they do not return in a timely fashion, we will check on the athlete's whereabouts.

We discourage parents from entering locker rooms and changing areas unless it is truly necessary. In those instances, it should only be a same-sex parent. If this is necessary, parents should let the alert a coach about this in advance.

If an athlete needs assistance with his or her uniform or gear (for example, a child under the age of eight), or an athlete's disability warrants assistance, then we ask that parents let the coach know beforehand that their athlete needs assistance.

Deck changing is prohibited (USA Swimming Article 102.8.4).

Locker Room Policy

MARS has staggered practices, with different groups arriving and departing throughout the practice day. It is therefore not practical to constantly monitor locker rooms, and changing areas over this extended course of time. While we do not post coaches inside or at the doors of the locker rooms and changing areas, we do make occasional sweeps of these areas. Coaches conduct these sweeps, with women checking on female locker rooms, and men checking male locker rooms.

USE OF CELL PHONES AND OTHER MOBILE RECORDING DEVICES

Cell phones and other mobile devices with recording capabilities, including voice recording, still cameras and video cameras increase the risk for different forms of misconduct in locker rooms and changing areas. The USA Swimming Athlete Protections Policies prohibit the use of such devices in the locker room or other changing area:

Article 305.3 *Use of audio or visual recording devices, including a cell phone camera, is not allowed in changing areas, rest rooms or locker rooms.*

Appendix C: MARS Anti-Bullying Policy

Action Plan of the Mid-Cities Arlington Swimming (MARS) to Address Bullying:

PURPOSE

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at MARS and will not be tolerated. Bullying is counterproductive to team spirit and can be devastating to a victim. MARS is committed to providing a safe, caring and friendly environment for all of 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 or other responsible adult.

Objectives of the MARS's Bullying Policy and Action Plan:

1. To make it clear that MARS 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. How to report bullying clear and understandable.
5. To spread the word that MARS takes bullying seriously and that all swimmers and parents can be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

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. Bullying results in pain and distress.

The USA Swimming Code of Conduct defines bullying in 304.3.7. Bullying is the severe or repeated use by one or more USA Swimming members of oral, written, electronic or other technological expression, image, sound, data or intelligence of any nature (regardless of the method of transmission), or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at any other member that to a reasonably objective person has the effect of:

- i. causing physical or emotional harm to the other member or damage to the other member's property;
- ii. placing the other member in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;
- iii. creating a hostile environment for the other member at any USA Swimming activity;
- iv. infringing on the rights of the other member at any USA Swimming activity; or
- v. materially and substantially disrupting the training process or the orderly operation of any USA Swimming activity (which for the purposes of this section shall include, without limitation, practices, workouts and other events of a member club or LSC).

REPORTING PROCEDURE

An athlete who feels that he or she has been bullied is asked to do one or more of the following things:

- Talk to your parents;
- Talk to a MARS Coach, Board Member, or other designated individual;
- Write a letter or email to the MARS Coach;
- Make a report to the USA Swimming Safe Sport staff.

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 and behavior can be accurately recalled and the bullying behavior can be stopped as soon as possible.

HOW WE HANDLE BULLYING

If bullying is occurring during team-related activities, we STOP BULLYING ON THE SPOT using the following steps:

1. Intervene immediately. It is ok to get another adult to help.
2. Separate the kids involved.
3. Make sure everyone is safe.
4. Meet any immediate medical or mental health needs.
5. Stay calm. Reassure the kids involved, including bystanders.
6. Model respectful behavior when you intervene.

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

FINDING OUT WHAT HAPPENED

1. First, we get the facts.
 - a. Keep all the involved children separate.
 - b. Get the story from several sources, both adults and kids.
 - c. Listen without blaming.
 - d. Don't call the act "bullying" while you are trying to understand what happened.
 - e. It may be difficult to get the whole story, especially if multiple athletes are involved or the bullying involves social bullying or cyber bullying. Collect all available information.
2. Then, we determine if it's bullying. There are many behaviors that look like bullying but require different approaches. It is important to determine whether the situation is bullying or something else.
 - a. Review the USA Swimming definition of bullying
 - b. To determine if the behavior is bullying or something else, consider the following questions:
 - What is the history between the kids involved?
 - Have there been past conflicts?
 - Is there a power imbalance? Remember that a power imbalance is not limited to physical strength. It is sometimes not easily recognized. If the targeted child feels like there is a power imbalance, there probably is.
 - Has this happened before? Is the child worried it will happen again?
 - c. Remember that it may not matter "who started it." Some kids who are bullied may be seen as annoying or provoking, but this does not excuse the bullying behavior.
 - d. Once you have determined if the situation is bullying, support all of the kids involved.
3. Support the kids who are being bullied
 - a. Listen and focus on the child. Learn what's been going on and show you want to help. Assure the child that bullying is not their fault.
 - b. Work together to resolve the situation and protect the bullied child. The child, parents, and fellow team members and coaches may all have valuable input. It may help to:
 - Ask the child being bullied what can be done to make him or her feel safe.
 - c. Remember that changes to routine should be minimized. He or she is not at fault and should not be singled out. For example, consider rearranging lane assignments for everyone. If bigger moves are necessary, such as switching practice groups, the child who is bullied should not be forced to change.
 - Develop a game plan. Maintain open communication between MARS and parents. Discuss the steps that will be taken and how bullying will be addressed going forward.
 - Be persistent. Bullying may not end overnight. Commit to making it stop and consistently support the bullied child.
4. Address bullying behavior
 - a. Make sure the child knows what the problem behavior is. Young people who bully must learn their behavior is wrong and harms others.
 - b. Show kids that bullying is taken seriously. Calmly tell the child that bullying will not be tolerated.
 - c. Model respectful behavior when addressing the problem.
 - d. Work with the child to understand some of the reasons he or she bullied. For example:
 - Sometimes children bully to fit in or just to make fun of someone is a little different from them. In other words, there may be some insecurity involved.

- Other times kids act out because something else—issues at home, abuse, stress—is going on in their lives. They also may have been bullied. These kids may be in need of additional support
 - e. Involve the kid who bullied in making amends or repairing the situation. The goal is to help them to see how their actions affect others. For example, the child can:
 - Write a letter apologizing to the athlete who was bullied.
 - Do a good deed for the person who was bullied, for MARS, or for others in your community.
 - Clean up, repair, or pay for any property they damaged.
 - f. Avoid strategies that don't work or have negative consequences:
 - Zero tolerance or “three strikes, you're out” strategies don't work.
 - g. Suspending or removing from the team swimmers who bully does not reduce bullying behavior. Swimmers may be less likely to report and address bullying if suspension or getting kicked off the team is the consequence.
 - h. Conflict resolution and peer mediation don't work for bullying. Bullying is not a conflict between people of equal power who share equal blame. Facing those who have bullied may further upset kids who have been bullied.
 - i. Follow-up. After the bullying issue is resolved, continue finding ways to help the child who bullied to understand how what they do affects other people. For example, praise acts of kindness or talk about what it means to be a good teammate.
5. Support bystanders who witness bullying. Every day, kids witness bullying. They want to help, but don't know how. Fortunately, there are a few simple, safe ways that athletes can help stop bullying when they see it happening.
- a. Be a friend to the person being bullied;
 - b. Tell a trusted adult – your parent, coach, or club board member;
 - c. Help the kid being bullied get away from the situation. Create a distraction, focus the attention on something else, or offer a way for the target to get out of the situation. “Let's go, practice is about to start.”
 - d. Set a good example by not bullying others.
 - e. Don't give the bully an audience. Bullies are encouraged by the attention they get from bystanders. If you do nothing else, just walk away.

Appendix D: MARS Whistle Blower Protection Policy

Mid-Cities Arlington Swimming forbids any form of retaliation against individuals for providing truthful information to a law enforcement official relating to actual or potential unlawful conduct. Such actions can result in immediate removal from the program or termination, if employed by MARS. MARS will establish procedures for handling complaints, including anonymous ones, about accounting and financial matters.

Appendix E: Team Travel Policy for Mid-Cities Arlington Swimming

Purpose: Athletes are most vulnerable to misconduct during travel, particularly overnight stays. This includes a high risk of athlete-to-athlete misconduct. During travel, athletes are often away from their families and support networks, and the setting – new changing areas, locker rooms, workout facilities, automobiles and hotel rooms – is less structured and less familiar.

Team Travel is defined as overnight travel to a swim meet or other team activity that is planned and supervised by MARS.

Section 1 - USA Swimming Required Policies

MARS travel policies must include these policies. These items are Code of Conduct stipulations in the USA Swimming Rulebook.

- a. Club travel policies must be signed and agreed to by all athletes, parents, coaches and other adults traveling with the club. (305.5.D)
- b. Team managers and chaperones must be members of USA Swimming and have successfully passed a USA Swimming-administered criminal background check. (305.5.B)
- c. Regardless of gender, a coach shall not share a hotel room or other sleeping arrangement with an athlete (unless the coach is the parent, guardian, sibling, or spouse of that particular athlete). (305.5.A)
- d. When only one athlete and one coach travel to a competition, the athlete must have his/her parents' (or legal guardian's) written permission in advance to travel alone with the coach. (305.5C)

Section 2 - MARS Policies

- a. During team travel, when doing room checks, attending team meetings and/or other activities, two-deep leadership and open and observable environments should be maintained.
- e. Athletes should not ride in a coach's vehicle without another adult present who is the same gender as the athlete, unless prior parental permission is obtained.
- f. During overnight team travel, if athletes are paired with other athletes they shall be of the same gender and should be a similar age. Where athletes are age 13 & over, chaperones and/or team managers would ideally stay in nearby rooms. When athletes are age 12 & under, chaperones and/or team managers may stay with athletes. Where chaperones/team managers are staying in a room with athletes, they should be the same gender as the athlete and written consent should be given by athlete's parents (or legal guardian).
- g. When only one athlete and one coach travel to a competition, at the competition the coach and athlete should attempt to establish a "buddy" club to associate with during the competition and when away from the venue.
- h. To ensure the propriety of the athletes and to protect the staff, there will be no male athletes in female athlete's rooms and no female athletes in male athlete's rooms (unless the other athlete is a sibling or spouse of that particular athlete).
- i. A copy of the Club Code of Conduct must be signed by the athlete and his/her parent or legal guardian.
- j. Team officials should obtain a signed Liability Release and/or Indemnification Form for each athlete.
- k. Team officials should carry a signed Medical Consent or Authorization to Treat Form for each athlete.
- l. Curfews shall be established by the team or each day of the trip.
- m. Team members and staff traveling with the team will attend all team functions including meetings, practices, meals, meet sessions, etc. unless otherwise excused or instructed by the head coach or his/her designee.
- n. The directions & decisions of coaches/chaperones are final.
- o. Swimmers are expected to remain with the team at all times during the trip. Swimmers are not to leave the competition venue, the hotel, a restaurant, or any other place at which the team has gathered without the permission/knowledge of the coach or chaperone.
- p. When visiting public places such as shopping malls, movie theaters, etc. swimmers will stay in groups of no less than three persons. 12 & Under athletes will be accompanied by a chaperone.
- q. The Head Coach or his/her designee shall make a written report of travel policy or code of conduct violations to the parent or legal guardian of any affected minor athlete.

I hereby agree to each of the MARS Travel Policies, as listed above, and understand the consequences associated with my

Revised August 2024

failure to comply with any of these policies.

Athlete's Printed Name

Athlete's Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Appendix F: Electronic Communication Policy

PURPOSE

MARS 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 MARS acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, MARS also realizes that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

GENERAL CONTENT

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.

For example, 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
- Note: Any communication concerning an athlete's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues or personal problems must be transparent, accessible and professional.

Whether one is an athlete, coach, board member or parent, the guiding principle to always use in communication is to ask: "Is this communication something that someone else would find appropriate or acceptable in a face-to-face meeting?" or "Is this something you would be comfortable saying out loud to the intended recipient of your communication in front of the intended recipient's parents, the coaching staff, the board, or other athletes?"

With respect to electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether the electronic communication with swimmers is **T**ransparent, **A**ccessible and **P**rofessional.

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

Accessible: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of the MARS's records. Whenever possible, include another coach or parent in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility.

Professional: All electronic communication between a coach and an athlete should be conducted professionally as a representative of MARS. 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.

FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, BLOGS, AND SIMILAR SITES

Coaches may have personal Facebook (or other social media site) pages, but they are not permitted to have any athlete member of MARS 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 Facebook. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to "instant message" each other through Facebook chat or other IM method.

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

Coaches are encouraged to set their pages to "private" to prevent athletes from accessing the coach's personal information.

TWITTER

MARS has an official Twitter page that coaches, athletes and parents can follow for information and updates on team-related matters. Coaches are not permitted to follow athletes on Twitter. Likewise, athletes are not permitted to follow coaches on Twitter. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “direct message” each other through Twitter.

TEXTING

Subject to the general guidelines mentioned above, texting is allowed between coaches and athletes during the hours from 7am until 9pm. Texting only shall be used for the purpose of communicating information directly related to team activities.

EMAIL

Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate between the hours of 7am and 9pm. When communicating with an athlete through email, a parent, another coach must also be copied.



APPENDIX G: Parent Pledge of Conduct

Dear Parents and Members:

As our organization grows and we continue to expand our programs, we seek to establish or clarify our policies. Our policies help to guide the organization and ensure continued success. An area we have not ever addressed is parent behavior, specifically, what type of behavior is expected of sports parents.

Our organization is fortunate to have highly experienced, professional coaches working to develop our children into better athletes and more importantly, disciplined people. As parents, it is absolutely essential that we give our coaching staff the respect and authority they deserve to run our team. Our coaches are hired for that purpose.

We as an organization highly encourage the following parental behavior:

- Open communication between parents, athletes and coaches emphasizing goal-setting and focusing on the performance expectations of both the athlete and the parents
- Meeting with the coaches/athletes/parents during normal operating hours to discuss issues
- Positive reinforcement of all athletes in all situations; team spirit, team loyalty
- Parental involvement in organizing and running of competitions and other team events

We as an organization will not tolerate the following behavior from parents:

- Coaching your children at practice or during competitions: that is the coach's job
- Interrupting or confronting the coaching staff during practice or competitions
- Abusive language towards coaches, athletes, parents, officials and your own children
- Any behavior that brings discredit or disruption to our athletes and our organization

Enclosed is a Parent Pledge of Conduct. The Code was developed as a standard to emphasize our organization's commitment to making everyone's involvement with our club a positive experience.

Parent Pledge of Conduct

Each MARS parent or guardian must agree to the following:

I PLEDGE TO GET MY CHILD TO PRACTICE AND MEETS ON TIME. I understand that being on time allows my child to fully participate and allows coaches and teammates to plan and execute practices and warm-ups.

I PLEDGE TO POSITIVELY ENCOURAGE MY CHILD AFTER EACH PRACTICE OR MEET. I understand that the top three reasons kids participate in sports are 1) to have fun, 2) to make new friends, and 3) to learn new skills.

I PLEDGE TO SET A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR MY CHILD. No matter what others may do, I will show respect for all involved in the sport including coaches, swimmers, opponents, opposing fans and officials. I understand that anyone can make a mistake and if an official makes a “bad” call against my swimmer, I will Honor the Sport and be silent.

I PLEDGE TO REFRAIN FROM YELLING OUT INSTRUCTIONS TO MY CHILD. I understand that this is the coach’s job. I understand that practices and meets are chaotic times for all involved and my communicating with my child during a practice will only hurt the coach’s ability to run an effective practice. I will limit my comments during a meet to encouraging my child and others involved in the meet.

I PLEDGE TO REFRAIN FROM ATTEMPTING TO COACH MY CHILD AT PRACTICE OR MEETS. I acknowledge this is the job of the coaching staff to do. If I have a question regarding a coaching decision during practice or meets I will first direct my question to my child’s coach.

I PLEDGE TO REFRAIN FROM MAKING NEGATIVE COMMENTS ABOUT MY CHILD’S COACH IN MY CHILD’S PRESENCE. I understand this plants a negative seed in my child’s head that can negatively influence my child’s motivation, behavior and overall experience.

I WILL RESPECT THE COACHES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CLUB AT ALL TIMES. I realize they have a difficult job and that their actions reflect their attempts to do what is in the best interests of the swimmers and the club. No matter how I feel about any coaching decision, including decisions related to group assignments, lane assignments, meet entries or other matters, and no matter how I feel about any decision made by a representative of the Club, under no circumstances will I in any way mistreat or confront a coach or representative of the Club in a verbally or physically inappropriate manner.

Communication is essential to the efficient operation of our Club. We encourage parents to get to know their coaches and pool supervisors, and to establish a constructive dialogue with them. If a conflict arises, however, we ask that you wait 24-hours before contacting your coach. We suggest you discuss any conflict in person or over the telephone rather than email. If you do not feel you want to discuss a matter directly with your child’s coach, we ask you to consider first contacting the Pool Supervisor, then the Head Coach, if necessary.

MID-CITIES ARLINGTON SWIMMING VIEWS ANY VIOLATION OF THE PARENT PLEDGE AS A SERIOUS MATTER. I acknowledge by signing this Pledge that any violations of the Pledge can be subject to sanctions by the Club, to be determined at the sole discretion of the Program Director. Such sanctions can include, among others, banishment from the stands at practices and meets and, in extreme circumstances, eventual ejection of the family from the Club.

I will honor the MARS Parent Pledge in my words and actions.

Swimmer Name(s) _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian signature(s) _____