

Springfield Sharks Swim Club
Team Handbook
Fall/Winter 2023-2024 Season



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PURPOSE OF THE SSSC TEAM HANDBOOK

This handbook is intended to provide information about the expectations and roles of participants in activities directed by the Springfield Sharks Swim Club (SSSC). These activities include all practices, competitions, lessons, and events run by the Sharks. All SSSC participants are expected to abide by the policies included in the SSSC handbook. Participants include: coaching staff, competitive swimmers, lessons swimmers, parents/guardians of swimmers, board members, and spectators at practices, competitions, and events. Please note that this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of participants and SSSC reserves the right to group other individuals who are involved with SSSC activities under the role of "participant."

ABOUT THE SPRINGFIELD SHARKS SWIM CLUB

Mission Statement: The Springfield Sharks Swim Club is a **competitive** swim team with the mission to build the swimming skills and general life skills of our community's youth.

Competitive Swimming Goals: We aim to build skills in the four competitive strokes, helping children improve their times so that they can reach their ultimate swimming potential, whether that be simply improving their times, meeting qualifying times for various important meets in high school swimming, or even reaching the point where they can join and/or be recruited for a collegiate swim team. We believe that competition, approached, modeled, and engaged in properly, helps grow healthy and competent humans. We aim to foster commitment to swimming not only as a hobby, not only as a childhood sport, not only as a high school sport, but ultimately as a lifestyle sport that a person can use to help remain healthy throughout their life. We want to build continuity in swimming so that we can continue improving our standing within the swimming community in Western Massachusetts.

General Life Skills Goals: We use our swim practice to help our swimmers develop their grit, resilience, persistence, responsibility, selflessness, good citizenship, commitment, teamwork and cooperation, and humility. We help our swimmers learn to take responsibility for their own choices and actions. Our coaching staff model 100% effort and commitment, and as such we demand the same from our swimmers. We believe high expectations result in improved performance and improve general outcomes. We aim to help our swimmers become strong – not only physically, not only mentally; ultimately we want our swimmers to become strong enough to consistently make the choices that will help make the world a better place for everyone.

Learn-to-Swim Goals: In addition to our competitive arm, which is our primary function, the Springfield Sharks also run a learn-to-swim program. This program is for children who have not yet developed the skills and endurance needed to compete, but still wish to build their swimming skills. We teach our learn-to-swim participants safety skills and respect for the water that they can carry with them the rest of their lives. We build the skills that they need in order to join the competitive side of the club using teaching methods that focus on the needs of each individual participant. This program provides swim instruction to those who might otherwise have trouble with access.

SSSC is an important organization for providing swimming instruction and equitable access to competitive swimming for Springfield residents and members of the larger Western Massachusetts community.

SSSC LEADERSHIP

Meet the Coaches

Teresa Skelly, Head Coach

Email: skellyteresa@gmail.com

Coach Teresa started her competitive swimming career with the Sharks when she was 11 years old. She continued swimming at Springfield Central High School, finishing her senior year as one of the team captains. She transitioned to coaching after graduating high school, becoming a member of the Sharks coaching staff in 2008 and eventually becoming the head coach of the Sharks in the fall of 2015.

Coach Teresa promotes growth of the whole person in her coaching philosophy and encourages the development of the values of persistence, grit, and empathy in her swimmers. She is a proponent of balancing mental and physical strength in setting and achieving athletic goals.

Coach Teresa also works as a special education teacher at Springfield Central High School.

Jerome Skelly, Assistant Coach

Coach Jerome started his competitive swimming career with the Sharks when he was 8 years old. He continued swimming at Springfield Central High School, serving as a team captain for his junior and senior years and competing at the Western Mass and State levels. Jerome also swam at the USA Swimming club level with Mei's Typhoon Swimming Club for two years while he was in high school. He then attended Cal Tech, competing for the Beavers men's water polo team for two seasons and swim team for one season. Jerome started coaching for the Sharks in 2014 and has been a major force behind the technical growth and innovations of the team since then.

Coach Jerome also works as math teacher at Springfield Central High School.

Patrick Russell, Assistant Coach

Coach Pat started his competitive swimming career with the Sharks when he was 11 years old. He continued swimming at Cathedral High School, where he also competed in cross country and track. Pat started coaching for the Sharks in 2015. Coach Pat brings consistency and a calming influence to the Sharks coaching staff, teaching swimmers the value of showing up and working hard every day.

Coach Pat also works as a history teacher at Springfield Central High School.

Coaching Roles and Expectations

The following is a description of roles and expectations of members of the SSSC coaching staff.

Head Coach

The current head coach of the Springfield Sharks Swim Club is Teresa Skelly. The role of head coach includes:

- Planning and scheduling of team activities (in conjunction with the Parent Board)
- Supervising and directing actions of all assistant coaches, junior coaches, and Learn-to-Swim volunteers
- Planning and supervising practices (in conjunction with coaching staff). This includes...
 - Developing and coordinating Summer and Winter season plans
 - Direct delivery of practices
 - Discussing swimmer strengths and weaknesses and creating improvement plans with parents and swimmers
 - Determining swimmer practice groups and criteria for practice leveling and assignment of practice levels
- Instruction of competitive swimming skills (in conjunction with coaching staff). This includes instruction in basic, intermediate, and advanced levels of...
 - The four competitive strokes: freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly
 - Proper competition starts in all four strokes and relays
 - Proper competition turns in all four strokes and Individual Medleys
 - Proper competition finishes in all four strokes
- Planning and supervising Learn-to-Swim lessons (in conjunction with the Parent Board and coaching staff). This includes...
 - Instructing children who require a flotation device to safely interact with the water
 - Instructing children who can interact with the water safely without a flotation device but are not ready to join the competitive arm of the team
- Planning and supervising competitions (in conjunction with the Parent Board and coaching staff). This includes...
 - Determining whether any individual is ready to compete
 - Planning competitions and assigning events (at both dual meets and Championships) with varying degrees of swimmer input
 - Planning and executing competitions using the Team Manager and Meet Manager computer systems
 - Supervising activities at competitions

- Planning and supervising other swimmer-related activities (in conjunction with the Parent Board and coaching staff)
- Determining swimmer post-season awards
- Behavioral management of swimmers (in conjunction with the Parent Board and coaching staff). This includes...
 - Creating behavioral expectations, protocols, and consequences and communicating these with parents and swimmers
 - Positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors
 - Progressive disciplinary measures
 - Removing swimmers from practice as needed
 - Discussion of behavior improvement goals and plans with parents and swimmers, including replacement behaviors
 - Developing and implementing accommodations for swimmers with disabilities
- Communication with Parents (in conjunction with the Parent Board). This includes...
 - Delivering important reminders and updates about practices, competitions, and other team events and information via TeamSnap and the Remind app.
 - Speaking with parents directly about swimmers as needed (both for positive reasons and to discuss changes as needed)

Assistant Coaches

The Springfield Sharks Swim Club currently has two assistant coaches: Jerome Skelly and Patrick Russell. All actions of the assistant coaching staff are directly supervised by the head coach. The role of assistant coach includes:

- Supervising practices
- Providing input to season and practice planning
- Working with head coach to assess skill levels of swimmers and readiness for various practice groups
- Delivering instruction of competitive swimming skills at the basic, intermediate, and advanced levels
- Supervising and delivering learn-to-swim lessons
- Supervising competition activities
- Behavior management of swimmers according to instructions and plans of the head coach
- Supervising actions of junior coaches and Learn-to-Swim volunteers according to instructions and plans of the head coach

Junior Coaches

The Springfield Sharks Swim Club allows and encourages its members ages 13 and up to develop their leadership skills by becoming junior coaches. Swimmers who would like to be junior coaches should apply directly and in person to the head coach.

Junior coaches are volunteers and must meet the following expectations and requirements:

- Must be active members of the Springfield Sharks Swim Club competitive team.
- Must maintain good standing as a Shark with high attendance and strong, active participation in their practice group.
- Must be enthusiastic about working with other swimmers.
- Must demonstrate strong leadership skills in their current practice group.
- Must demonstrate patience and empathy.
- Must demonstrate the maturity needed to accept feedback and change at the direction of a senior coach.

Parent Board Members Fall/Winter 2023-2024

Name	Title
Kimberly Carrasquillo	President
Jessica Cherival	Vice President
Sheila Cotto	Treasurer
Desiree Robinson	Secretary
Jules Barry	Member at Large
Justin Barry	Member at Large
Elizabeth Borrero	Member at Large
Dawn Dowsett	Member at Large
Sondra Kunanele	Member at Large
Mariana Perez	Member at Large
Nicole Ruiz Velez	Member at Large

Contact Info: springfieldsharks413@gmail.com

TEAM COMMUNICATION

Communication is extremely important. Competitive swimming is unique amongst sports as it requires a significant amount of communal input and work from all participants. Our coaching staff is happy to discuss any questions or concerns that parents and guardians may have, but we ask that you wait until before or after practice to have these discussions so that coaches can focus on the swimmers.

If you have any communications that require immediate attention, please address them to the board member on duty at the front table at practice. If you have a question for the coaching staff, you can always email Coach Teresa at skellyteresa@gmail.com

Phone calls and texts to coaches should only be used in the event of an emergency or last-minute meet cancellations.

Team Website:

Many team updates are communicated and posted on our team website. Please familiarize yourself with our team website at <https://springfieldsharkswimclub.teamsnapites.com/>

TeamSnap:

All Sharks are required to register for activities using TeamSnap. We recommend that you maintain your username and password so that you can streamline registration for future activities. During the season, Coach Teresa sends emails at least once weekly via TeamSnap to the emails that you include in your registration. These emails communicate updates about practices, meets, reminders about upcoming events and fundraisers, and any other important information that we need all participants to know.

Remind:

Please note that we are in the process of phasing out our use of Remind in favor of TeamSnap. However, we will still communicate that emails have been sent out using the Remind app if you still prefer to use Remind.

TEAM POLICIES

SSSC Code of Conduct

1. No phones or video recording devices may be used in bathrooms or locker rooms for pictures or recording. ***
2. All participants are expected to refrain from any and all forms of violent physical conduct with any other person. ***
3. All participants are expected to use appropriate language and refrain from swearing and the use of any form of slur in all areas – pool, stands, locker rooms, hallways, etc.
4. There is no running on the pool deck or in the stands.
5. A parent/guardian must remain on site with any swimmer under the age of 13.
6. Sportsmanship is always expected. Treat all members of our team AND other teams with respect and understanding, regardless of the behavior/choices of others. ***
7. Listen to and respect the coaches. Swimmers should keep their heads above water and avoid distracting behaviors during instruction.
8. There is no vandalism allowed in any area of the school. ***

*This code of conduct applies to all SSSC participants – this includes competitive and lessons swimmers as well as parents/guardians, coaches, board members, and spectators.

**Violation of any of the above policies will incur consequences, up to and including the possibility of suspension and termination. Consequences will be determined on a case by case basis by the parent board and the coaching staff.

Violation of the policies marked thusly () may result in immediate termination from the team pending review by the parent board and the coaching staff.

Bullying Prevention Policy

The Springfield Sharks Swim Club believes that all swimmers have a right to a safe and healthy environment. We have an obligation to promote mutual respect, tolerance, and acceptance among participants (swimmers, parents, coaches, and fans). Behavior that infringes on the safety of any participant will not be tolerated. Participants shall not bully or intimidate any other participants through words or actions. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to direct physical contact, verbal assaults, the use of electronic methods, and social isolation and/or manipulation. See appendix for detailed definitions.

The SSSC policy prohibiting bullying includes but is not limited to the following:

- Any participant who engages in bullying will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- Participants are expected to immediately report incidents of bullying to the head coach or the on-duty member of the parent board.
- The head coach and executive board members will promptly investigate and address each complaint of bullying in a thorough and confidential manner.

Bullying and intimidation will not be tolerated. Disciplinary action will be taken following each confirmed incident of bullying. Disciplinary action may include but is not limited to the following:

- Restorative justice – implemented by head coach (discussion based)
- Reassignment of lanes during practice
- Suspension
- Termination

NOTE: Coach Teresa is particularly adamant about addressing behaviors that are precursors to bullying as a prevention strategy. This is an intensive and discussion-based practice that focuses on choices and actions. This strategy recognizes that any person can be either a victim or perpetrator of bullying, and all situations must be addressed directly and individually with both empathy and discipline. SSSC asks that you respect and support this endeavor.

Definitions:

Bullying:

Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behavior that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.

Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium, and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

Covert Bullying:

Covert bullying can be very difficult for someone outside of the interaction to identify. It can include hand gestures and threatening looks, whispering, excluding, or turning your back on a person, restricting where a person can go and who they can talk with. Social bullying (spreading rumors, manipulation of relationships, excluding, isolating) is often covert bullying.

Cyberbullying:

Cyberbullying includes any form of bullying behavior that occurs online or via a mobile device. It can be verbal or written, and can include threats of violence as well as images, videos and/or audio.

Physical Bullying:

Physical bullying includes hitting, pushing, shoving, intimidating, or otherwise physically hurting another person or damaging or stealing their belongings. It includes threats of violence.

Social Bullying:

This is sometimes called relational or emotional bullying, and includes deliberately excluding someone, spreading rumors, sharing information that will have a harmful effect on the other person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.

Verbal and Written Bullying:

Verbal and written bullying includes name-calling or insulting someone about an attribute, quality, or personal characteristic.

Bathroom and Locker Room Conduct Policy

In order to ensure the safety of all individuals while they are on "Sharks Time," SSSC implements a Bathroom/Locker Room Conduct Policy to promote healthy and safe behaviors from all team members (coaches, parents/guardians, and swimmers).

Please make sure that you follow the following directives **whenever** you use the locker rooms, whether they be at our home pool or at away Sharks events:

- 1) To protect the privacy of all people using the locker room facilities, **cellphone use is not allowed in the locker rooms**. Any cellphones brought into the locker room must be stowed away in a bag.
- 2) Respect the belongings of others in the locker room. Do not touch the belongings of another person without their permission.
- 3) Respect the personal space and privacy of others in the locker room. Give each other enough space in the locker room, and allow people to change in peace, whether it be out in the general locker room or in a stall. People have the right to get changed safely without being harassed by the words or actions of others.
- 4) Change quickly and efficiently. Make sure you are spending an appropriate amount of time in the locker room. You should **only** use the locker room to use the restroom or get showered and dressed before/after practice. Any other uses of the locker room are **not** appropriate. Use the locker room for its intended purpose only so you can get in and out quickly.
- 5) Use only positive language. There is no need to say anything insulting or mean to anyone else. This is the same rule that holds for **ALL** of "Sharks Time," but it is particularly important in the locker room as that can be a vulnerable state and we need to be aware of the feelings of others.
- 6) Control your volume – there is no need to scream and yell for **any** reason in the locker room. This is not an appropriate place to use loud voices.
- 7) Be safe – make sure you are walking, not running, and keep your hands to yourself. This way, no one will get unnecessarily injured.
- 8) Make sure you take care of your belongings – they are your responsibility. Keep them all in a concentrated area (do not spread out too much) and check your things before you leave to make sure you don't lose anything.
- 9) Always keep your belongings with you – do not leave your things unlocked or unattended.
- 10) Any child that is not able to change or use the restrooms unsupervised **MUST** be accompanied by a responsible person. Please speak to a board member if you require assistance with this policy.

Cell Phone and Technology Policy

- 1) Cell phone use by swimmers is prohibited during practice time, including during dryland and pre- and post- stretching periods.
- 2) Cell phone use by swimmers while on the pool deck is prohibited at all times.
- 3) SSSC is NOT responsible for ANY lost or damaged technology or electronics that is brought into the pool area by ANY person – anyone who brings such items into the pool area does so at their own risk.
- 4) Phone use of any kind, including texting and phone calls, is prohibited in the locker rooms (includes adults and swimmers).
- 5) SSSC prohibits photography/videography of any individual without that person's explicit consent during Sharks programming (practices, lessons, competitions – home AND away).
- 6) SSSC prohibits minor participants from posting on any social media platforms during, around, or about Sharks programming.

SSSC also recommends that parents/guardians discuss appropriate social media use with their children. Please keep in mind that ultimately, all social media posts are public.

Photography and Media Policy

SSSC reserves the right to use photographs and videos of swimmers taken by a designated camera person for the purpose of training, fundraising, and/or publicity. Photos and videos of swimmers may be posted on the team website and/or Facebook page. All SSSC registrations are accompanied by a waiver granting this specific media permission.

Practice Cancellation Policy

SSSC makes every attempt to hold all practices and events as scheduled. However, there are times when it is not possible to hold programming due to circumstances beyond the control of SSSC leadership. In the event of a practice cancellation, the team will be notified via TeamSnap email, Remind, and Facebook post. SSSC employs redundant communications as a good faith effort to try to reach all participants.

Lifeguard Policy

SSSC conducts programming in pools owned by the City of Springfield. Per Springfield policy, no pool use is allowed unless a Springfield assigned lifeguard is on duty. If there is no lifeguard on duty (e.g. if a lifeguard must call out sick and there is no available substitute assigned by the city), we cannot hold programming. If programming is cancelled due to a lifeguard no-show, the team will be notified via TeamSnap email, Remind, and Facebook post. A Springfield lifeguard must be on duty before any swimmer is allowed to enter the pool for any SSSC programming. Swimmers are not allowed to enter the water until directed by a coach.

Inclement Weather Policy

SSSC is required to follow City of Springfield policies regarding building closures and pool use in the event of inclement weather. If the City of Springfield cancels after school activities during the school year, SSSC must also cancel programming. SSSC follows Springfield policy regarding electrical storms and will defer to the lifeguard on duty in the case of storms occurring during programming. If inclement weather is forecasted, please do not assume that practice is cancelled until you receive a notification. Please do check TeamSnap, email, Remind, or Facebook before you leave for practice to make sure that you are up to date on practice status. If programming is cancelled due to inclement weather, the team will be notified via TeamSnap email, Remind, and Facebook post.

SSSC Swimmer Expectations

The Springfield Sharks Swim Club (SSSC) expects members of its competitive arm to show commitment to the team and model exceptional behavior to the community. As such, we hold the following expectations for swimmers:

Behavior

SSSC expects its swimmers to follow behavior expectations to ensure a safe environment for all participants. As such, we expect swimmers to:

- ALWAYS be listening to ALL coaching staff and helpers
- Follow practice logistics. To make sure that every swimmer gets the most out of practice safely, they MUST:
 - Swim WALL-TO-WALL (no stopping, no walking, no standing)
 - Swim on the RIGHT side of the lane
 - Swim in an appropriate order (fastest swimmers in front followed in descending order – this ensures that no one gets run over and that there are no “traffic jams”)
 - Immediately get out of the way as soon as you complete the practice element (in larger practices, this means getting COMPLETELY out of the water AS SOON AS you are done in order to avoid jams)
- Practice in good faith and participate in ALL elements of practice (pre-practice dynamic stretches, in water practice, post-practice mobility work) with 100% effort
- Race in good faith – arrive on time, check in with the coaching staff, complete your warm-up with good effort, pay attention to the meet, know and complete all events with 100% effort, check out with the coaching staff before leaving
- Show **respect** to self, coaching staff, teammates, all people supporting the Sharks (parents, volunteers, younger siblings, fans), and all people on other teams, no matter what they do or say.
- Think about what you are doing before you do it, make good decisions, and take responsibility for the positive **and** negative consequences of your actions.

SSSC coaching staff use progressive discipline and restorative justice methods to reinforce behavioral expectations. We will follow a “three strike” system as follows:

- Strike 1: warning – “x”
- Strike 2: 2-5 minute time-out and discussion for improvement with a coach – “xx”

- Strike 3: removal from practice and follow-up conference with parent, swimmer, and head coach to determine the issue and develop a plan to work on fixing it – “xxx”

Effort, Commitment, and Attendance

Swimmers should be putting in a good faith effort 100% of the time at practice. We expect **all** swimmers to:

- Attend practice as consistently as possible given their schedule
- Arrive to practice on time (as allowed by schedule) **and** communicate with the coaching staff when this is not possible
- Sign-In at the front desk at every practice
- Follow all behavioral, sportsmanship, anti-bullying, and technology expectations of the coaching staff
- Arrive prepared with all equipment needed for practice (suit, cap, and goggles on; water bottles and any inhalers/emergency medications on deck and/or easily accessible; jewelry/technology removed and stowed safely away)
- Get dressed quickly and efficiently before **and** after practice
- **Know their practice group and schedule ahead of time**
- Be focused on swimming and ready to go (ready to listen and achieve)
- WANT to be in the water (eager to get in and make progress)
- Understand the expectations of them before they get in

Competition

SSSC expects ALL swimmers to compete in as many meets as they can, including Championships. Make sure you know the competition schedule **as soon as it is available** (this is provided by the team and is the swimmers' and parents' responsibility to know) so you can plan around it and/or notify coaching staff ahead of times of any meets that you will need to miss (including Championships).

- If you have conflicts with meets, it is your responsibility to notify the coaching staff.
- Any swimmer AND/OR parent who is avoiding participating in meets due to transportation should discuss carpooling with a coaching staff, board members, teammates, or other parents – we are a team, we hold each other up and help each other out
- Any swimmer AND/OR parent who is avoiding participating in meets due to anxiety and/or fear should schedule a time to speak with Coach Teresa about why this is and what we can do to help you out

- Please commit to any meets that you sign up for – if something comes up and you are running late or unable to make a meet, contact a coach or board member DIRECTLY so we can update our meet plan – do NOT no-show (not only does your child miss events, but it most likely means that relays will be cancelled as well, impacting other swimmers' events)

Sportsmanship

SSSC expects ALL participants to display good sportsmanship by interacting with ALL individuals (teammates, parents, board members, coaches, supports, people from other teams) professionally and supportively. Please:

- Use positive and professional language with both others and self. If you have a critique, please deliver it in a positive and supportive manner.
- Keep your hands to yourself and be aware of your body and its motions.
- Support each other and be each other's cheer leaders.
- Think about your actions before you act.

Privacy, Agency, and Consent

It is the position of SSSC that all people have a right to privacy, agency, and consent. As such, all swimmers should feel comfortable and safe in their environment and should communicate directly and immediately with a coach and/or a board member either in person or through a parent if they feel that anyone's actions have violated their privacy, agency, or consent. SSSC takes any issues of privacy, agency, and consent very seriously and will investigate and mediate any issues immediately using restorative justice methods.

Anti-Bullying Stance

SSSC is adamantly against all forms of bullying and as such put a lot of effort into prevention and restorative justice in cases of potential bullying. However, please remember that punishment is not a long-term solution, so we take a restorative justice approach involving all parties. We also know that bullying comes in many forms, including forms that are hard to detect. In such cases, we rely on parents and swimmers to report bullying **immediately** so that we can work to fix the issue right away.

Technology/Valuables

SSSC is not responsible for any technology or valuables belonging to swimmers. It is the swimmer's (and their parent/guardian's) responsibility to keep such items safe. In addition, we ask that swimmers not use technology during practice or meets without parent/guardian supervision (except for contacting a parent/guardian in case of emergency) or on the pool deck. To protect

everyone's privacy, we do not allow swimmers to take pictures of other swimmers and cellphones and cameras/recording devices are **not** allowed in the locker room. Swimmers are not allowed to make social media posts while in SSSC programming or in the vicinity of SSSC activities and should not post photos/videos of SSSC activities on social media. Swimmers should not bring valuables/technology to practice if they are concerned with losing those items. We do have a "Lost and Found," and we will try our best to help find lost items, but ultimately, we are not responsible for them.

Communication

You may have noticed that many of these expectations involve communication. This is ultimately our greatest strength if we can use it properly. Please communicate any and all issues **directly** to a coach or a board member immediately. Remember, we cannot fix a problem we don't know about, and it is not reasonable to expect the coaching staff and Parent Board to see and/or anticipate 100% of potential problems. It is a fact of life that conflicts and problems are going to come up – that is unavoidable. But if we can communicate professionally, directly, and immediately, we can resolve most of these issues in a way that works for everyone.

We ask that during practices and meets, swimmers speak to a coach about any problems that may arise. We follow a chain of command and during practice time, swimmers are the responsibility of the coaching staff, so it is a safety issue for swimmers to leave practice to talk to a parent/guardian before informing a coach. Swimmers who need to speak to a parent/guardian during practice must speak to a coach and obtain permission first.

Talk to a coach (ideally head coach) for issues involving:

- Practice or competition
- Swimmer injury
- Swimmer behavior
- Problems between swimmers

Talk to a board member for issues involving:

- Payment, money, or finances
- Parent volunteering
- Problems with another adult or between adults
- Lost items

Parent/Guardian Expectations

Practice Expectations:

- Please be aware of the practice schedule. Swimmers are eligible to “level up” during the season as their abilities improve. Levels are not tied to age or years of experience. As such, you should also be aware of the subsequent levels that your swimmer may attain so that you can make logistical decisions that will best suit your family.
- Please try to attend practice as much as possible given your schedule and please try to arrive in a timely manner given your schedule. If you must arrive late, please make sure your swimmer gets to their correct practice group as quickly as possible upon arrival. Please make sure the coaching staff knows in advance if your swimmer will be late to practice.
- Make sure your child completes ALL elements of practice (pre-practice dynamic stretches, in water practice, post-practice mobility work). If you **must** leave early, it is your job as parent/guardian to inform the coach as we will not rely on swimmer reporting for this (treat this like early dismissal from school). We ask that you try not to do this as it undermines our coaching and the experience of the swimmer.
- Please try to observe practice when possible and support your swimmer’s efforts outside the pool. If you learn alongside your swimmer, they will make progress more rapidly.
- If there is a reason that your swimmer has difficulty with our coaching and discipline style (e.g. hearing impaired, ADHD, etc.) it is IMPERATIVE that the coaches know (you may ask for a private meeting with coaching staff) so that we can properly accommodate your swimmer’s needs. I generally expect swimmers to show that they are listening by being quiet and looking at the person who is speaking (again, if there is a reason this will not work for your child, it is the **guardian’s** responsibility to communicate this to the coaching staff so we can accommodate needs).

Competition Expectations

- Please see competition expectations for swimmers – parents/guardians are expected to support their swimmers in meeting these expectations.
- Please support your swimmer and encourage them to race in good faith – arrive on time, check in with the coaching staff, complete their warm-up with good effort, pay attention to the meet, know and complete all events with 100% effort, check out with the coaching staff before leaving.

Payment Policy

Please make sure that your account is paid in full before the first practice of the season. SSSC understands that this may not be possible for every family and will discuss financial issues on a case-by-case basis. Please remember that SSSC is fully parent-run, and the team must pay for permits, lifeguards, and coaching staff (among other expenses) so it is imperative that each family takes on their part of the financial responsibility. **Please also be aware that SSSC has a no refund policy (signed off in registration waivers).**

Volunteering and Donations Responsibilities

All members of the team are required to volunteer for and donate to the team during the season. As a community organization, we rely on parent volunteering for recruitment and the management of competitions. Please make sure that you are in communication with the Parent Board regarding volunteering responsibilities. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to keep track of the times that they have volunteered and donated and be proactive about fulfilling the volunteering and donations requirements.

Families that do not volunteer for the minimum of 4 times during the season AND meet the concessions donations requirements will be required to pay an **additional fee of \$100 per each swimmer in the family that is registered to SSSC** in order for those swimmer(s) to fulfill all obligations to the team. Please be aware that fee will NOT be prorated or reduced, even for families that have completed some, but not all, of the volunteering AND donation requirements. This fee must be paid in full prior to the start of the final week of the season. Failure to pay this fee may result in a) swimmer(s) being withheld from the Championships meet and/or b) swimmer(s) not being allowed to return to SSSC in subsequent seasons until the fee is paid.

Volunteering opportunities include (but are not limited to):

- Spending one-half of a meet as a timer or stroke-and-turn official = 1 time volunteering
- Volunteering as an auxiliary instructor at 4 separate learn-to-swim lessons = 1 time volunteering
- Donating a complete meal for Munchie Monday = 1 time volunteering

Each family is required to make a donation to the concessions stand at each Sharks home meet. This number will vary depending on the number of home meets included in SSSC's schedule in each season. A single donation to concessions stand constitutes one of the following actions:

- \$20 contribution = 1 time donating
- Providing 2 items from the list of requested concessions items = 1 time donating

Swimmers 13 and over (as well as those under 13 who have demonstrated interest and maturity and have applied to the head coach for an exemption) are eligible to volunteer on their own behalf at the discretion of the head coach and the Parent Board. This volunteering can be in the form of:

- Volunteering as an auxiliary instructor at 4 separate learn-to-swim lessons = 1 time volunteering
- Assisting at 2 separate level 1 or level 2 practices as a Junior Coach = 1 time volunteering
- Assisting at meets as a peer mentor for a complete meet = 1 time volunteering

All swimmer volunteering is under the direction and discretion of the head coach, who communicates these hours to the Parent Board for consideration.

Technology/Social Media Policy

Please be aware that we do not allow cellphones, cameras, and other recording devices in the locker rooms. Please do not use these devices for any reason while you are in the locker room (including texting or talking on the phone – please keep all use of technology outside of the locker rooms).

Please keep social media posts about SSSC positive. Please do not take pictures of children who are not your own without the **express permission** of the parent/guardian of that swimmer. Please also ask permission before you post a picture or statement involving any other person involved with the team (other parents, board members, coaching staff). Please think carefully before posting anything involving SSSC to social media. Swimmers should not make social media posts about SSSC.

Swimmer and Coaching Staff Support

Please be aware of the SSSC behavior (including the SSSC consent and anti-bullying stances), effort, and attendance expectations of swimmers, as well as progressive discipline used by coaches. Please reinforce these expectations with your swimmer.

Please make sure you use positive language with your swimmer at practices and meets. A negative word from a parent can be devastating to a swimmer's psyche and overall athletics career. If you are unsure of how to motivate a seemingly apathetic swimmer, please speak to a coach.

Please use positive language and show sportsmanship with other parents/guardians/spectators from our team **and** parents/spectators from other teams. This helps the coaching staff by modeling good sportsmanship for the swimmers and preventing conflict which will ultimately require attention from the coaching staff and Parent Board. Any issues between adults (either from the Sharks or with other teams) should be **immediately** brought to the attention of both the head coach and the Parent Board.

Administrative Support

You show support to the administrative end of this team by following payment, volunteering, and communication policies. SSSC is a parent-run team and therefore relies on community support to continue functioning. Please do your best to follow team policies and communicate whenever this is not possible.

Communication

You may have noticed that many of these expectations involve communication. This is ultimately our greatest strength if we can use it properly. Please communicate any and all issues **directly** to a coach or a board member immediately. Remember, we cannot fix a problem we don't know about, and it is not reasonable to expect the coaching staff and Parent Board to see and/or anticipate 100% of potential problems. It is a fact of life that conflicts and problems are going to come up – that is unavoidable. But if we can communicate professionally, directly, and immediately, we can resolve most of these issues in a way that works for everyone.

We ask that during practices and meets, swimmers speak to a coach about any problems that may arise. We follow a chain of command and during practice time, swimmers are the responsibility of the coaching staff, so it is problematic for swimmers to leave practice to talk to a parent/guardian without informing a coach. Swimmers who need to speak to a parent must speak to a coach and obtain permission first.

If you as a parent/guardian have an issue, the same concept applies. Please speak immediately to a coach or a board member if any issues arise.

Talk to a coach (ideally coach Teresa) for issues/questions involving:

- Practice or competition
- Swimmer injury
- Swimmer behavior
- Problems between swimmers

Talk to a board member for issues involving:

- Payment, money, or finances
- Parent volunteering
- Problems with another adult or between adults
- Lost items

Note for Swimmers who Menstruate

As swimmers age, they grow and change in their level of maturity, their thinking, and their bodies. For some swimmers, this includes the start of their menstrual cycle. At SSSC, we are body positive and celebrate all aspects of our swimmers, including menstruation. We want all our swimmers to be comfortable with who they are and prepared for this change as it occurs. This note is to address myths about how the menstrual cycle impacts your ability to swim and discusses ways to help swimmers develop comfort with their bodies during menstruation.

Myths about Menstruation

Myth #1: having my period means that I need to stop swimming permanently

This is **false**. You can still swim and have many options for comfort. Ultimately, you always have the option of not swimming when you are actively menstruating (this is not recommended but it is your body and therefore your decision). However, something that is as natural as menstruating should not prevent you from doing the things that you love.

Myth #2: I shouldn't swim when I am on my period

This is **false**. You can definitely still swim when you are actively menstruating, and as stated above, you have many options for comfort.

Myth #3: I can't swim when I'm on my period because of my physical discomfort/pain

This is mostly false. While some people experience cramping and pain during menstruation that is debilitating, this is something that you **need** to address with your doctor **ASAP**. In most cases, doctors actually recommend physical activity during menstruation because it tends to help relieve some of the effects of bloating, cramping, and other pain associated with menstruation. You can and should also take over-the-counter pain medications as recommended by your doctor as opposed to "getting used to" the pain.

Options for Swimming During Menstruation

- "Free Bleeding": you could always just swim. This is an option, but admittedly one most people are not comfortable with. However, you should **not** be ashamed of your body, which is why I put this out there.
- Tampons/Menstrual Cups: these are pretty simple to use and a generally effective method. I always advocate that people be comfortable with their own bodies, but I also understand personal discomfort with these devices and people can have allergies to tampons, predisposition to TSS, or allergies to silicone.

- “Period Proof” bathing suits: there are several companies selling bathing suits that can be worn during menstruation and are advertised as offering protection from “leaks.” While these are expensive and the fit is variable and requires experimentation, I recommend this option for younger swimmers and as a comfortable alternative to tampons/menstrual cups that still allows a swimmer to participate while menstruating. Some companies include:
 - Knix: link to order suits ([click here](#))
 - Rubylove: link to order suits ([click here](#))

LEARN-TO-SWIM LESSONS INFORMATION

The Springfield Sharks Swim Club Learn-to-Swim program helps children develop basic water safety skills. We take a non-traditional approach to instruction which involves getting children into the water daily and as much individual support as possible. The ultimate goal of our learn-to-swim program is to prepare our students to become members of our competitive team.

Qualifications

Any child 18 and under who is not able to swim a complete, non-stop 25 yards without assistance. Children under the age of 5 must be fully potty-trained (NO swim diapers – NO exceptions), able to listen to instruction, and able to sit on edge of pool with limited supervision (guardians are welcome to enter the water with their own child if they are not able to meet the listening requirement)

Programming

- Instruction of floating, breathing (bubbles) and overall comfort with the water
- Instruction of basic swim techniques for rudimentary freestyle and backstroke – including kicking and pulling
- Instruction of safe underwater swimming, submerging techniques, and jumping from edge of the pool into the water
- Programming involves instructors being hands-on with students and making use of flotation devices; progress is student-led and focused and will center the student's comfort with the water and belief in their abilities, with appropriate challenges provided by instructors (especially for more reluctant or anxious students).

Lessons-to-Team Philosophy

The primary reason that SSSC includes swim lessons in its programming is to develop the competitive branch of the team. As such, focus is highly geared towards developing the foundations needed for learning the racing strokes as well as the maturity and safety to effectively participate in the entry level of the competitive practices. Please be aware that swimmers in lessons are **strongly** encouraged to join the competitive Sharks team as soon as they can pass the baseline tryout.

COMPETITIVE TEAM PRACTICE INFORMATION

Practice Attire and Equipment

SSSC recommends that all swimmers wear competitive style swimsuits, a pair of competitive swim goggles, and a swim cap during practice. Swimmers with long hair are **required** to wear a cap during practice for safety and focus purposes. Please speak with coaching staff if you have any questions about what is considered a competitive style swimsuit, questions about goggles, and whether your swimmer should wear a swim cap.

Swimmers are expected to provide their own bathing suits, towels, swim caps, goggles, and water bottles at practice. SSSC is not responsible for providing swimmers backups of any of the aforementioned equipment in the event that a swimmer forgets, misplaces, or damages their equipment. SSSC recommends that swimmers carry an extra pair of goggles, an extra cap, and an extra bathing suit in their practice bags in case of an equipment malfunction. SSSC also recommends that parents/guardians check the practice bags of swimmers before leaving for practice and before going home to ensure that no personal equipment is misplaced.

In addition to personal equipment, swimmers will periodically use kickboards, pull buoys, paddles, fins, swim socks, and parachutes during practices at various points in the season. All special equipment is provided by SSSC during practice, but swimmers are welcome to purchase their own equipment if they so choose. SSSC coaching staff is committed to continuously improving, and so will periodically introduce new equipment to practice sessions based on research into updated training techniques.

Practice Groups

Please see the SSSC website and your rostering on TeamSnap for details about practice groups. Please be aware that swimmers may be moved between practice groups at the discretion of the coaching staff. The coaching staff consider swimmers' skill levels and maturity when determining practice groups.

Schedule

The practice schedule is posted on the team website. Your swimmer(s) specific practice information can be viewed on the TeamSnap app after they have been assigned to their practice group and rostered. Any changes to practices will be posted on the team website, Facebook, and TeamSnap. Please check TeamSnap daily for any practice changes or cancellations.

Pool Location

SSSC conducts all programming out of the High School of Science and Technology in Springfield (1250 State Street) **unless** there are building closures. In the event of a long-term building closure at Sci-Tech, the City of Springfield will assign us an alternate location. Please check TeamSnap and your weekly emails for any updates to pool location.

Practice Expectations

Please refer to “Swimmer Expectations” and “Parent/Guardian Expectations” for full details on practice expectations. However, to highlight a few points:

- Swimmers should arrive already dressed in their practice suits whenever possible OR should plan to arrive early enough to change completely BEFORE their practice time starts.
- SSSC recommends that swimmers attend as many practices as possible (ideally this means all practices)
- Swimmers should gather all required equipment for a given practice session before the start of the practice. Daily equipment is listed on a whiteboard in the deep end of the pool.
- If a swimmer must use the restroom during practice, they must notify a coach. Swimmers are expected to limit bathroom breaks to between sets except in the case of emergency. The bathroom should not be used to escape practice sets or socialize during practice.
- Swimmers are expected to listen to coaching staff and demonstrate respect to their coaches and teammates at all times.
- Swimmers are expected to put in their full effort in every practice, including dryland portions of practice. The swimmer is accountable for maintaining and improving their technique during practice.
- If a parent/guardian would like to speak to a coach, SSSC asks that they wait until before or after practice. All questions should first be directed to the board member on duty at the time.
- Swimmers and spectators are expected to abide by all requirements in the SSSC code of conduct at all times, including the bathroom/locker room use policy and the cell phone/social media policy as stated in the “Team Policies” section of the SSSC Team Handbook.

COMPETITIONS

General Information

SSSC competes in the Pioneer Valley Swim League (PVSL) during the winter season and the Western Mass Summer Swim League (WMSSL) during the summer season. In each season, SSSC competes in several dual meets (competitions against one other team) and Championship meet at the end of the season (against all teams in the league). In the winter season, SSSC will typically have 7-8 dual meets before Champs in late January. In the summer season, SSSC will typically have 5 dual meets before Champs in late July.

SSSC also runs a distance meet for swimmers in June as an opportunity for swimmers to try out longer events than are typically available for them.

SSSC always runs a time trials for its swimmers after about 4-5 weeks of practice to assess swimmers' competitive abilities. This also functions as a safe practice run for swimmers who are new to competition.

The competition schedule is posted on the team website each season as soon as it becomes available. All scheduling is also posted on TeamSnap. Please check the website and TeamSnap for the competition schedule as well as updates and changes to competitions.

Competition Attire

Swimmers are expected to compete in competition bathing suits. For girls, this means a one-piece suit in a competitive cut (please speak to a coach with any questions). For boys, this means jammers or speedo-style suits. Competition suits are supposed to be a tighter fit to limit drag and ideally should be set aside for competitions only, which will improve their longevity. Swimmers should use racing goggles with adjustable straps for competitions.

All swimmers are required to wear an official SSSC cap during competitions. A cap is issued to swimmers upon their initial registration with SSSC.

As recommended for practices, swimmers should pack backup goggles, caps, and bathing suits in case of an equipment malfunction at a meet.

Competition Expectations

Please refer to “Swimmer Expectations” and “Parent/Guardian Expectations” for full details on competition expectations. However, to highlight a few points:

- All swimmers who are part of the competitive arm of SSSC are expected to compete in swim meets (Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, and Level 4).
- All swimmers should, to the best of their ability, compete in as many meets as possible (ideally this means all meets, including Champs).
- All swimmers should sign up for meets in a timely manner via appropriate channels (TeamSnap or on the list at the front table)
- All swimmers should arrive at the posted times to their swim meets.
- In the event of tardiness or sudden change of plans on a meet day, parents/guardians are expected to notify the coaching staff.
- Failure to notify a coach of tardiness may result in a swimmer being “scratched” or removed from a meet.
- No-Shows to meets may result in a swimmer being withheld from competing in relays.
- All swimmers are expected to wear appropriate competition attire at meets (please see “Competition Attire” section for details), including the SSSC swim cap.
- Parents/guardians are expected to volunteer at meets as timers and officials (please see “Parent/Guardian Expectations – Volunteering and Donations Requirements” for full details)
- Parents/guardians are expected to donate to concessions at each home meet (please see “Parent/Guardian Expectations – Volunteering and Donations Requirements” for full details)