**NKAT Parent Handbook**

**Welcome to NKAT Swimming!**

Our NKAT coaching staff welcomes your family and your swimmer to t**he North Kent Aquatic Team (NKATs) Our Coaches and Board of Directors have put together this handbook for your family. This handbook contains information that we feel is critical for the next step in your swimmer’s journey with our program.**

**What is NKAT Swimming?**

**NKAT Swimming is a competitive swimming program for athletes age 4-24+ and fits into the community aquatics program offered to residents of North Kent County**

**Competitive Swimming**

**NKAT Swimming is a club member of the West Michigan Swim League (WMSL) and participates in invitational meets, dual meets and season ending championship meets offered by the WMSL swim league.**

**NKAT Swimming is also a club member of USA Swimming, Inc. (USAS). USA Swimming is the national sport governing body (NGB) for competitive swimming – the program offers education and programming to swimmers from novice to Olympic level. As part of the USAS system, NKAT Swimming is also a member of Michigan Swimming, our Local Swim Committee (LSC) reporting to USA Swimming, Inc (USAS).**

**Michigan is part of Central Zones/Region 3, there are several swimming regions or “zones” within the United States. At the state level, Michigan Swimming is divided into several “districts” and NKAT Swimming swimmers compete at meets at the end of our short course USAS season representing these various districts.**

**NKAT swimmers belonging to Level III – Senior Group are USAS members. These swimmers compete in approved meets and invitationals throughout the season (yards in fall and winter, and meters in the spring and summer). Events are offered by age-groups during the regular and championship season.**

**Swimmers in Level I, II and even Cubs may become members of USA Swimming and participate in USAS events, but they are not required to do so.**

**Group Focus**

Our club follows training and developmental competencies for athletes drawn from the American Development Model for Swimming. This is an evidence-based a swimmer development model based on best practices for motor, cognitive, and social development and is linked here.

**Our club program includes three Age Group levels, a Senior Developmental group, and Senior Group. Our developmental team includes our Cubs swimmers. To see group description, competencies, and advancement criteria, click here.**

**Seasons, Practices & Equipment**

The NKAT team offers programming year-round with 4 session per year for Level I – Senior Group, and shorter sessions and clinics for our Cubs swimmers. Our seasons are divided into Summer and Winter with the USA Swimmers competing in Short Course competition courses in the Fall and Winter and Long Course Competition (Olympic format) in the Summer.

NKAT Sessions

* Fall session (late August/early September – late November)
* Winter session (December – February/March)
* Spring session (mid-April – early June)
* Summer session (early June – July/August)

NKAT Swimmers can sign up for sessions rather than seasons or annually so that they may engage in other activities or sports. Swimmers are also able to use a multi-sport/activity option for Levels III – Senior group if they are interested in participating in swimming while doing another activity or sport.

Practices

NKAT swimmer will be offered 3-6 practices/week (includes an occasional Saturday depending upon weekday meets, or level within the club) and are conducted for 60-135 minutes (dependent upon group level). Practices, include dryland, team building, or mental training activities. Almost all practices in are held at NHS High School.

Practices typically include all the following: attendance and quick team meeting, stretch, warm up, kick set, drills, swim set, pull set, turns, finishes, or starts. Swimmers follow progressions for skill development and training session during practices over the season based upon your swimmer’s level and the time of season.

Practices times are posted on our webpage under Practice & Meet Calendars. NHS provides our team with pool availability. We work with the school to post our group schedules as far out in the season as possible, however changes do occur. Please watch your email for updates to the schedule – we try to get notice on schedule changes out as soon as possible.

Since our program schedules around high school and middle school sports, please check the schedule carefully in late October/early November when MS and HS sports change. Their programming will affect our schedule.

Winter breaks practice schedules are posted once we have verified holiday pool availability with NHS. Typically, our Level IV – Senior swimmer attend additional practices over the December break to improve stamina and focus on stroke mechanics for the season ahead. Spring break is a down time for pools and swimmers. There are no practices scheduled during this time. During Summer our Level IV – Senior swimmers may consider additional practices based on their developmental needs and interests.

Winter and Summer sessions include Championship meets. Your swimmer’s winter or summer session will conclude with that meet or a few days following that meet (Summer). Traditionally, a banquet or team event is held to celebrate our Short Course (Fall/Summer) and Long Course (Spring/Summer) seasons respectively.

It is important to communicate with your coach about any absences as soon as you know about them. Our coaches plan the season using progression for skill development and stamina. Should your swimmer not be in attendance they may miss critical information or skill practice. If your swimmer misses a practice, please have them see a coach at their next practice to ask if they have missed any important announcements.

Equipment Needs

We recommend that swimmers obtain the following equipment to use during practices:

* Adult kick board\*
* Youth pull buoy\*
* Fins\*
* Whiffle balls (Level III+)
* Socks (for kick sets) (Level III+)
* Yoga mat
* Snorkel (Level II+)
* Tempo Trainer (Level III+)
* Water bottle
* Mesh bag to carry equipment
* 1-piece swimsuit
* Goggles
* Cap

\*Available at NHS for use during practice

Swimmers may use NHS equipment (kick board, pull buoy, fins) if they are unable to obtain their own however, we cannot guarantee availability or condition. Tempo trainers are manufactured by Finis and can be ordered online. Pricing fluctuates but typical costs are $42 to $50 depending on vendor. The tempo trainer is used by swimmers in level IV – Senior.

NKAT Swimming is a Speedo Team and is pleased to offer NKAT Swimming team members team discounts from our dealer Different Strokes Swim Shop.

You may also access our online team order options at Different Strokes Swim Shop or email them at https://www.different-strokes.com/click on the Team Stores site and North Kent Aquatics and type in to place your order. When ordering items, especially Tech Suits, it is best to call them directly to speak to a sales representative to let them know that you are a NKAT Swimming team member.

Practice Cancellations

NKAT Swimming follows the NHS district process for cancellations. When NVPS cancels schools for inclement weather, please watch your local channel and NVPS school notifications. NKAT Swimming will also send out an e-blast to members following NHS closings by 2:30p of the day of the closing with any pool/practice updates.

For all other closings (programming changes, water chemistry, etc) we are sometimes able to use Northville Park Swim Association when NHS closes facilities in the summer. NKAT Swimming will send out an e-blast to members on the day of the closing with any pool/practice updates.

**Swim Meets**

NKAT swimmers compete in West Michigan Swim League (WMSL) meets and in USA Swimming (USAS) meets.

**The WMSL is a developmental, community-based league and is intended for novice and young age groupers (4-13 years). Swimmers compete in invitational meets, dual meets and season ending championship meets events Swimmers in our Cubs 1 & 2, Level I, II and III are well-suited to swim in these meets.**

**NKAT swimmers belonging to Level III – Senior Group are also USAS members. These swimmers compete in sanctioned meets and invitationals throughout the season (yards in fall and winter, and meters in the spring and summer). Events are offered by age-groups during the regular and championship season. Swimmers in the Cubs groups, Level I, and Level II may also have memberships is USAS and compete in USAS events.**

Regular season meets will have a specified format such as Age-Groups where swimmers compete by like age (8 & under, 9-10, 11-12, 13 & over) or Senior (where a qualifying time is required or Open Events without a qualifying time where swimmers of various ages are mixed).

If your swimmer swims in Level III – Senior Group, she or she will become a registered USA Swimming Athlete member. USA Swimming membership is an affiliation required to attend USAS. Meets are conducted throughout the year in seasons that we call Short Course (measured in yards), and Long Course (measured in meters).

USA meets offer 1-3 sessions (4-5 swims) each day over 1-3 days. You do not have to attend all sessions, but you will find that athletes will swim different events on different sessions. Attendance at other USA meets not offered by is highly encouraged. Talk with your group coach or our parent reps about which swim meets your swimmer should attend.

**There are some USAS meets that are designated as “approved” meets. Both USAS member swimmers and non-members swimmer may compete. Our NKAT Team will host one of these meets in November.**

We ask swimmers and families to participate in our home meets. We have a Fall USA meet in November, several WMSL dual meet in both short and long course season.

Meets are offered to swimmers for sign up through our webpage at [www.NKATswimming.org](http://www.NKATswimming.org). See the Events Tab. Emails announcing these meets also go out with directions for sign up. Some meets require a qualification time. The qualifying time must be achieved to compete in the event.

As part of the West Michigan Swim League (WMSL) our swimmers can participate in meets offered by our league. USAS registration is not required. Times earned at WMSL invitationals and championship meets can count towards USAS swims. NKAT Swimming will host one or two winter dual meets and compete against other area clubs in 1 or2 other dual meets. We repeat this process within our league in the summer. To compete in a WMSL championship meet at the end of either season (short course/long course) your swimmer must compete in one dual meet. WMSL Invitationals are also available for swimmers.

We ask that once you confirm your meet attendance via meet sign up, and that you notify coaching staff immediately if your availability should change. Swimmer and meet information is resent prior to a meet to use to help remind your swimmer of his/her events and have the meet info at your fingertips. In this meet information coach phone numbers will be released in the event of a last-minute emergency or illness.

Each season culminates with championship meets.

**Championship Meets**

Each season (not session) culminates with championship meets (both WMSL and USAS). These meets are built upon qualifying times. Please watch your emails and speak with our parent reps to learn about which meets your swimmer can attend. Meets are offered to swimmers for sign up through our webpage. See Events Tab. Emails announcing these meets also go out with specific directions for sign up. Some meets require a qualification time. Your coaching staff will work with you and your swimmer to sign up your swimmer at championship meets such as Regionals, States, Sectionals, Zones, Futures, Michigan Open, and Jr Nationals as they progress through the program.

Qualifying times get progressively tighter, and the field of athletes narrow as the Championship season progresses. Your swimmer’s season traditionally ends after his or her final championship meet or shortly thereafter. Please watch our team newsletter and emails to mark your calendar for those meets and season end dates.

**Apparel**

NKAT Swimming Swimmers are encouraged to show their team pride. NKAT Swimming team apparel can be purchased through Different Strokes Swim Shop or when NKAT Swimming runs a pop up apparel shop (3-4x a year). You can access this online store by clicking on the Different Strokes at the bottom of our home page in the center of the three partner icons.

Our club will also try to coordinate end of season team shirts for purchase for our athletes to wear at end of season meets.

 **Parent Reps & Coaching Staff**

**When you join NKAT Swimming you become part of a family. We understand that there are a lot of moving parts to competitive swimming, least of which are the terms we use. We want to make this journey as comfortable as possible.**

**Your coaching staff is available to answer your questions. You may email us through Team Unify (our webpage). All coaches will receive your incoming email.**

**If you have a question of a specific coach, please direct your question or comment to that coach. You may also contact each of us before or after a practice with prior arrangement (sometimes we move from our first group practice to a subsequent practice). We can arrange a mutually agreeable time to discuss your questions without distraction from other activities.**

**We can also communicate by email. If you wish to do so but do not have our email address, please use the Team Unify inbound email to request a contact from a specific coach. We will respond within 24-48 hours (depending upon meets), but often sooner.**

**Electronic Communication**

Since our club communicates electronically, we are asking that parents take a minute to log into your family account and check information to make sure it is current. We are in the process of verifying emails and phone numbers in our electronic swim office. to enhance electronic communication. Here is a how to article to get you set up to receive emergency texts.

If you are newer to you may not know that we have an App for our club called On Deck.

On Deck is available for FREE for our team through Team Unify. Parents can download OnDeck and in real-time, access your account, events, news, jobs, and more. Having On Deck also allows you to receive electronic updates quickly and easily.

You can easily download the app using Google Play or the Apple App Store. You must have up to date account information in our swim office at Team Unify

**Athlete Protection**

**Due to athlete protection standards, we appreciate your understanding that we must follow USA Swimming electronic communication policies as many of us use a personal email to communicate and, as part of our USAS coaching membership, sign a code of conduct to abide by electronic communication protocol.**

**If an issue is urgent, our personal contact information is located on the home page in the very top left corner by the Facebook icon. You may also connect with us at practice before or after workout starts.**

**Parent Representatives**

**Our Parent Representatives can also be helpful. They are typically present at your Level III practices. There are several reps for you to connect with questions. They have either taken several swimmers through our program and know that swimming can be confusing at time or have an older swimmer and have seen it all.**

**They are available to welcome you to our program and to make the transition to the next level easier. If you cannot locate your parent rep, please contact any of our coaching staff and we will provide an introduction.**

**Our NKAT Swimming team page** [www.NKATswimming.org](http://www.NKATswimming.org) **is a great starting place to obtain information and get your swimmer into meets and team events. Our webpage is set up to assist parents and swimmers to sign up for meets, get the latest team news, register for swim sessions, manage your swim account, read about team accomplishments, and find documents and links to Michigan and United States Swimming.**

**Fees & Dues**

**Membership USA Swimming**

**As part of our participation with USA Swimming events if your swimmer participates in Cubs, or in Level I -III your swimmer’s group has a USA Swimming membership option.**

**This group requires USAS membership for insurance and liability compliance with USA Swimming. The season is also longer with Fall being approximately 14 -weeks, Winter 13-18 weeks (depending upon final championship meet), Spring 8 – weeks, and Summer 8-10 weeks (depending upon final championship meet).**

**Dues for USAS membership are set by USA Swimming, Inc. and are assessed annually and usually around the end of the year for the subsequent calendar year. Fees for practice are built on a program budget and are Board Approved and are assessed during the online registration period. Late registrations are assessed a “late fee”. By setting up your account within our team website you can manage your account and view itemized invoicing information.**

**Meet entry fees**

**Swimmers are charged entry fees for competing in meets.**

**Meet & Event Sign-up**

**Using our webpage, swimmers are asked to declare their intent to swim or not swim in a meet. We ask that you always declare your intent even if not swimming.**

**When a swimmer declares his/her intention to swim a meet (commits), he/she or the coaches (with validation from account holder) can select events to swim at a meet. If you do not know which events your child should swim, please leave a note in the comment section telling the coaches to select events. If the meet has multiple days, please make sure to list which days your swimmer will compete. Coaches will select the events.**

**A few days will be provided to modify the entry based on other meet performances or family schedules. However, once the meet closes, the entries are processed to a meet report and imported to the host club.**

**Fees**

**Once meet entries go live, fees are assigned to the team. Meet entry fees are usually $6 per individual event). A per swimmer meet surcharge ($1) is collected by Michigan Swimming with an administrative fee included for processing. This fee can vary based on meet and time of year. Meets also include a club fee to each swimmer: $10 session fee. If a swimmer has another family member participating, the second family member is assessed $5, if there is a third family member, no fee is assessed.**

**A meet entry report with all swimmer events is generated from that meet and that report will be used to bill the swimmer’s account.** There are no fees for dual meets.

Once meet entries for USA and WMSL Invitational meets have been submitted to the host team, fees are non-refundable. Those fees will be charged to your account and can be paid by check or automated payment.

Please note that if your swimmer cannot swim at a meet after the entry for the meet has closed (i.e., they must “scratch” from the meet), those fees are still applied and the responsibility of the account holder.

Swimmer Check-in pre-meet

It is important to communicate with your coach about meet attendance as quickly as possible should your meet attendance change, or should you be late to arrive to a meet.

Swimmers must pre-check in for most meets. Check in closes shortly after the start of warm up. Should you experience a delay in arriving at a meet to have your swimmer check in you must contact the coach designated as meet contact to let them know that you are delayed but intend to swim. Swimmers who have not checked in before Meet Check-in closes will be scratched from the meet. Entry fees are the responsibility of the member.

Declaring swimmers for relays is required by the meet host prior to the start of a meet where relays are included. Missing swimmers will delay that process extensively. A swimmer who does not show for a meet may cause a relay to be scratched from the meet however, if available other swimmers, called “alternates” will fill that spot on the relay.

If a swimmer fails to show for a meet, he or she may be assessed the entry fee for a relay should it need to be scratched because an alternate could not be found.

 **Championship meets**

**For swimmers competing in USAS Championship meets, a per athlete fee is assessed by the team by Michigan or USA Swimming to cover these meets. The fees are different from regular season meet fees. A reminder will be sent out to attending families after these meets that billing has taken place.**

**Fee assessment**

**Fees notifications are sent by Team Unify to member accounts monthly (in arrears). Fees can be paid at any time by accessing your Team Unify account at** [www.NKATswimming.org](http://www.NKATswimming.org) **.**

**With most of our swim meets occurring between October and March during the fall/winter sessions and May and July in the Summer session it is important to know that your account will see a higher amount activity. Unless joining in the fall or spring, fees for USA membership are typically assessed in December and will hit accounts in January.**

**Please check your account regularly as accounts that carry a balance longer than 60 days cannot enter events at swim meets until the balance is paid. If you have questions about your account, please contact our billing administrator at** NKATBilling@gmail.com

**NKAT Swimming Group Expectations**

**Our kids are the center of our program. With a program vision executed by our coaching staff, our kids experience the benefits of wonderful instruction and guidance while they explore and develop their swimming talents. As part of this handbook, we think it is important to conclude with a review of our team Code of Conduct Agreement.**

**As part of NKAT Swimming we expect that swimmers will conduct themselves according to the athlete code of conduct agreement which is signed upon group registration. The purpose of adopting a code of conduct is to provide a safe, fair, and enjoyable environment for the sport of swimming and to support the mission of the NKAT Swimming Swim Club (USAS Safe Sport). According to the code of conduct swimmers agree that:**

1. Possession or use of drugs and other illegal substances of any kind are prohibited. The use of alcohol or tobacco is prohibited throughout the swimming venue.
2. Willful damage to the equipment and facility of the swimming venue is prohibited.
3. Inappropriate language, verbal threats or threatening gestures or insubordinate conduct to meet personnel, coaches, or in the presence of other swimmers is prohibited.
4. Unsportsmanlike or unsafe conduct at the swimming venue is prohibited.
5. I will remain silent and make an honest effort to listen and look when the coaches are speaking.
6. I will commit myself to give my best effort at every practice and meet and will be respectful towards the coaches.

As part of the team, parents and swimmers agree also to treat all swimmers, coaches, officials, parents and spectators with dignity and respect. In doing so, parents and swimmers will:

1. Report to practice with enough time to begin practice as scheduled.
2. Be responsible to learn how to correctly complete meet entries, assume responsibility for meet fees, including those fees assessed when I scratch my swimmer from a meet after the entry date has passed, to learn best times, and other important information, and remit fees in a timely manner.
3. Abide by the following policies: Travel, Electronic Communication & Bullying,

Additionally, parents agree:

1. To promote the emotional and physical well-being of the athletes despite any personal desire to win in competition. My role is to be positive and supportive in all situations. I will not willfully undermine the relationship between the swimmer and the coaches.
2. That no one will be permitted on the pool deck during practice, including parents or siblings, without the approval of an NKAT employee.
3. Will remember that my child/children swim for their enjoyment, not mine.

The above code of conduct is in effect throughout the year. Additionally, anyone who, in the opinion of the head coach or coaches, acts in a manner that would interfere with the objectives listed above will be subject to immediate discipline and other censorship including barring from competition, suspension from practice, or dismissal from the team.

NKAT team members/parents should be respectful of their peers, coaches, and officials. NKAT team member/parent not acting in such a manner will be asked to change or stop that behavior. If that team member/parent fails to comply, they will be asked to leave the venue and disciplinary procedures will follow.

The coaching staff holds the final word on any rules, regulations, coaching decisions, or disciplinary action. In the case a resolution cannot be made between the coaching staff and the affected party, additional resources will become involved, and the board of directors will resolve the situation.

**Board of Directors & Committees**

**NKAT Swimming is a 501c3, a non-profit organization, operated according to the IRS, and is governed by a Parent Board. Board members are elected and serve a designated term. Offices are President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Member-at-large. Elections take place in the Spring of each year.**

**Committees operate with the intent to maximize swimmer and family experience. Committees include special events, governance, meet management, finance, parent group liaison, merchandise and apparel, and publicity/recognition & communications. Officials are also needed to run home meets. If you are interested in officiating, or committee or Board activities, please contact your coaching staff or a serving Board member and they can put you in touch with the correct person who can answer questions.**

**Questions**

We know you may have any questions or concerns. Our coaching staff, parent reps and Board of Directors want to let you know that we are here for you! Should you have questions, please contact any of us. Our contact link can be found on our webpage by clicking on the “Contact Us” brick in the upper right corner.

Your swimmer’s experience is very important to us. We are committed to supporting you and your swimmer on their journey to help achieve his or her potential. We hope to see them emerge from NKAT Swimming as confident, positive young adult who will be tomorrow’s leaders.

We have found that that the mantra “It Takes a Village” is essential in our approach to see each athlete succeed. Therefore, we welcome you to our family and thank you for becoming a part of NKAT Swimming.

**Your Coaching Staff & Board of Directors**