

OFFICIALS - REFEREE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Purpose:

This policy lays out the requirements and procedure for maintaining the North Carolina Swimming Referee certification/recertification program. This policy and the requirements are maintained by the North Carolina Swimming Official's Committee.

Referee Apprenticeship Requirements:

- Been a certified starter for at least six months
- Worked at least 15 sessions at three different meets under three different referees as a certified starter at a USA Swimming sanctioned or approved meet. These sessions should have been equally divided between timed final meets and prelim/final meets.
- Worked as a starter or a chief judge for at least 2 sessions at a NC Championship meet. (Age Group Champs or Sr. Champs- for prelim/final experience at the championship level). You may also use age group or senior sectionals if hosted in NC.
- Obtain two letters of recommendation from NC certified referees. These letters need to be emailed to the Officials Chair.
- Receive approval from the Official's Committee and Official's Chair.
- Attend a Referee Clinic (coordinated by the Official's Chair). The mentor referee or representative of the officials' committee will conduct the clinic.
- The Official's Chair will select a mentor referee who will be an active participant during the apprenticeship process.
- Successfully complete the Referee, Administrative, and Timing Judge exams at USA Swimming (not the recertification versions). Successfully complete the Starter and Stroke and Turn recertification exams. This MUST be done BEFORE you work your first meet of your apprenticeship. Your on deck apprenticeship will officially begin once you complete the testing.

Procedure:

- Applicant should request emails from two NC certified referees recommending acceptance into the apprentice program be sent to the officials chair. Upon receipt of the two emails, the officials chair should request input from the officials committee on the applicant's acceptance into the program.
- After acceptance by the committee, the official's chair will work with the applicant to pick a mentor.
- When applicant is accepted, the officials chair shall send a welcome letter and arrange a clinic for the applicant with an experienced referee. This information will include what the apprentice should be proficient at before the final evaluation meet.
- Successfully complete the Referee, Administrative, and Timing Judge exams at USA Swimming (not the recertification versions). Successfully complete the Starter and Stroke and Turn recertification exams. This MUST be done BEFORE you work your first meet of your apprenticeship. Your on deck apprenticeship will officially begin once you complete the testing.

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Referee Certification Requirements:

- Work all sessions at a minimum of 5 meets that include at least three sessions for each meet. You may combine two meets that are two sessions each to count for one meet. One session meets will not count even when combined. Any exceptions must be pre-approved or authorized by the meet referee and the Officials' Chair.
- **At least one of the 5 meets needs to be a prelims/finals meet.** You must work as the admin referee apprentice and deck referee apprentice (as needed) at this meet.
- Your meet schedule must be approved in advance by your mentor referee and the officials chair, or his/her designee.
- You must contact the meet referee at least one week prior to the meet to let them know you are coming and to find out if they need any help before the meet.
- Your final meet must be age group champs in either short course or long course unless otherwise authorized by the officials chair or his/her designee.

Procedure:

- Apprentice should review NCS Meet schedule with mentor to determine which meets they can work that will meet the requirements for the program and fit in with the apprentice's schedule.
- Submit proposed meets to officials chair for approval
- At least one week prior to planned meet, contact meet referee to notify them of your availability.
- Print out copy of meet announcement and take to meet. Be prompt for all sessions unless excused by Meet Referee.
- Discuss experience with Mentor/meet referee after each meet (or session). The meet referee will email a short summary/review of the apprentice referee's performance at his/her meet to the mentor referee with a copy to the official's chair. This information will also be shared with the apprentice.

Recertification Requirements:

To recertify as a North Carolina Swimming referee, the official must do the following:

- Maintain non-athlete membership with USA Swimming/North Carolina Swimming
- Keep the background screening current
- Keep the athlete protection education requirements current
- Take and pass the USA Swimming referee recertification test tri-annually
- Officiate at least six (6) sessions annually at USA swim meets.

Appendices:

Welcome Letter w/checklist

Note to apprentices:

No matter how much training you receive, no matter how varied the meets you work, no matter the number of referees that you apprentice under, you will always be confronted with new situations that will test your knowledge of the rules and your ability to use good judgment. No amount of training will expose you to all the situations that you will eventually confront, but hopefully the training you do receive will expose you to enough different situations that you will be prepared to handle both the expected and unexpected.

You will need to become proficient with the items on the checklist during your apprenticeship process. This checklist will be used during your evaluation meet as a guide to make sure you are comfortable with all aspects of becoming a referee. Remember, this is a mentoring process. This is not a test where you receive a grade. Please discuss any of the items with your mentor referee or the officials chair if you need some help.

Before you attend any meet that you will be apprenticing at, please thoroughly read the meet information paying particular attention to heat and event orders. Also, pay attention to how many events and relays each swimmer and team may swim. Remember that the meet announcement is the “rule book” for the meet. The meet announcement must be followed, even if it is poorly written. We cannot change the meet announcement just because there is a better way to do things. If you have specific changes that need to be made, you must have 100% agreement from ALL coaches. **BE VERY CAREFUL ABOUT THIS. CONSULT YOUR MEET REFEREE ABOUT THE CAN OF WORMS YOU MIGHT OPEN.**

You need to work ALL sessions at each meet you apprentice at unless the meet referee releases you from some of the sessions. There are things that you will not be able to experience unless you are at every session. A meet must have at least three sessions to count as an apprenticeship meet.

Please don't get discouraged if you are required to work more than 6 full meets to complete your apprenticeship. My job is to make sure that you are ready for most situations that you will encounter. You can ask any of the recent referees and all will say that an extra meet or two goes a long way toward solidifying their knowledge. The number of meets required really depends on what type of meets you work during your apprenticeship. Please discuss this with your mentor.

Note: You may shadow a Meet Referee at one additional Timed Final meet approved by me in advance if you would like to be certified as a Timed Final Meet Referee when you are approved at your evaluation meet.

Thanks for taking on the challenge.

Mike Hoffer – North Carolina Swimming Officials Chair

officialschair@ncswim.org

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Checklist

Deck Referee

1. **Read** the “GUIDE TO OFFICIATING SWIMMING” on the USA Swimming website (the Referee chapter in particular!)
2. **Know the Rules** and the official interpretations published by the USA Swimming Rules Committee
3. **Coordinate with the Meet Referee and other Deck Referees to:**
 - Establish how heats will be run – fly-overs, cleared pool, “chase starts”, etc.
 - Establish “standard” whistle protocol for the meet and where the “on deck” referee will be located.

Suggested protocol:

 - Short whistles - based on the meet pace established by the Meet Referee
 - Long “step up or in” whistle – when the swimmers are ready. (If possible, resolve any issues before the first long whistle.)
 - Second long whistle for backstroke – when the last head is up
 - Turn the heat over to the starter when all swimmers are accounted for; either on the blocks or in the lanes and there are no apparent issues behind the blocks. (This should be immediately after the last whistle in most heats). Ask the Starter to say “Relax please” or step the swimmers down if any issues can’t be promptly resolved. Remember the outstretched arm does not necessarily “close” the heat! USA Swimming rules do not specify when a heat is “closed”
 - Let the Starter decide when the swimmers are ready to start
 - manage the starting area – timers seated for starts, only starting swimmer in front of timers at the start, etc.
4. **Work with the Starters:**
 - on their preferred starting location, where you will stand and how you will turn the heat over to them
 - to decide how you will resolve common issues like “untidy” starting block areas (reduce the chaos to a minimum to set the tone for the meet)
 - on accommodation for disabled swimmers
 - on how you would like to be advised of swimmers with problems in the starting area, equipment issues, etc.
 - handle false starts according to the current guidelines from NC swimming . Mark on heat sheet and allow starter to initiate the false start call.
 - When a swimmer steps up late, investigates situation before allowing the swimmer to swim or issues a “delay of meet” disqualification (according to meet referee guidelines for the meet).
5. **Read and understand the information in the Meet Announcement**, including warm-up requirements
6. **Keep the meet flowing**, but do not pressure starters to “pick up the pace”
7. **Try not to turn away from the pool** while a heat is in progress - avoid *any* “paperwork” until all heads are up after the start
8. **Record the start time of each event**
9. **Effective interaction with S&T officials** when processing DQ’s, including asking the three standard questions; what was your jurisdiction, what did you observe and what was the disqualification according to the rulebook.
10. **Verify information on the DQ slip** (name, club, heat, lane and violation).
11. **Dealing with coaches questions and concerns.**
12. **Diplomacy**
13. **Ability to keep a calm demeanor during stress or crisis.** Ability to communicate in a clear and precise manner. Maintain a positive attitude.
14. **Develop your own “mental check list”** of things to do before, during, and after your duty session. For example:
 - Before the session:**
 - Check the Meet Announcement and heat sheet for any “red light” situations
 - Transitions from slowest to fastest and fastest to slowest heats
 - Breaks between events
 - Deck seeded events; verify that the seeding has been distributed to the announcer, coaches, officials and timers
 - Are deck seeded events followed by pre-seeded events! Do coaches, officials, and timers know?
 - Coordinate with the assigned Starter to observe the pool and enforce compliance with warm-up rules
 - Open pace lanes at the designated time and racing start lanes as requested (open additional racing start/sprint lanes if demand warrants). Coordinate with the Announcer and Marshalls
 - With the Starter, check starting equipment and starting platforms
 - Review deck set-up in general – Quietly notify Meet Referee of deficiencies or safety issues

- **Before each event:**
 - Check for re-seeds. If any, are they on **colored paper**? Do the announcer, coaches, officials and timers have them?
 - Have copies been posted conspicuously for swimmers?
 - Is your Starter (and are you) ready and are CJs and Judges in place?
- **Before each race:** (All of this should only take a second; two at most!)
 - scan the deck for officials in position and equipment problems (pads hanging, cables in lanes, people leaning on backstroke flag poles, etc.),
 - glance at the starter to see if issues have been observed
 - if finals, count the swimmers while parading or being announced
 - check if timing has been reset (ability to do this will depend on the system used and location of cues, if any)
- **After the start:**
 - glance to see if the timing system started (consider a recall if it didn't)
 - watch for all heads up
 - move a few meters down the pool (never more than 1 or 2 meters past the backstroke flags!)
 - glance back at start end judges
 - note start time (if it is the first heat), empty lanes and false starts
 - watch swimmers and stroke judges
 - in distance races – check scoreboard (if visible) for missed touches and incorrect counters (use CJ to convey corrections)
 - check turn end judges
 - handle false starts according to the current guidelines from NC swimming . Mark on heat sheet and allow starter to initiate the false start call.
 - acknowledge and note any DQ's and process them expeditiously
 - move back to start with incoming swimmers at the end of the heat
 - glance at Starter to see if there may be issues with the next heat
 - blow short whistles, etc.
- **After each event:**
 - check all DQs have been finalized (including swimmer or coach notifications)
 - reconcile DQs, DFSs, No Shows and adjustments with admin so the event can be “closed”
 - check with admin for potential “swim offs” and resolve positions for finals
- **Other Very Important Stuff:**
 - Considers “body language” when “on duty” and at all other times when accessible - always assume video coverage!
 - Try to face the pool when standing anywhere near it, even when not on duty
 - Be alert, attentive, focused, calm, professional, and approachable
 - Always be “friendly” and helpful to coaches, swimmers, and other officials; even if they are not
 - Try to take all discussions and emotional issues off-deck and away from front and center
 - If issues need to be resolved or discussed with coaches, CJs or STs, consider turning the heats over to the “next up” Referee
 - Similarly, be ready to step in when “next up”. Watch and listen so that you don't need to be summoned!
 - Maintain your sense of humor
- **Remember: Deck Referees:**
 - can adapt to meet conditions and needs
 - are willing to learn
 - don't read more into the rules than is written
 - find ways (within the rules) to let swimmers compete, and don't over interpret procedural rules
 - appreciate swimmers, coaches, officials and volunteers of all levels and interact with them respectfully on all occasions
 - are neatly uniformed, look confident, are competent, and are never imperious
 - advise the Meet Referee and Deck Referees of any non-routine decisions made. If possible, involve them in those decisions
 - do the Deck Referee job well and don't overstep those responsibilities unless asked by the Meet Referee (this doesn't mean that you can't help out here and there)
 - self evaluate after all shifts, sessions, and meets, and
 - look forward to their next meet
 - have, and generously apply, **COMMON SENSE**
 - make sure the benefit of the doubt goes to the swimmer
 - are willing to, and frequently, work as a **Stroke and Turn Judge**

Admin Referee

Record keeping

- 3 Ring Binder or folders
- Verifies forms, supplies and reports are on hand
- DQ slips, relay cards, scratch form, no show form
- DQ log, scratch from finals form, no-show penalty log
- Reports with warning flags regarding age/eligibility, total/daily number of swims
- Psyche sheet (reviewed prior to distribution)
- Distance event check-in sheets
- Entries/Registration
- Verification of eligibility
- Proof of times, if necessary

Management of Times

- Adjustments/Supervision of: Timing Equipment Operator & Timing Judge and computer operators
- Knows how to do a time adjustment for a lane and heat malfunction

Meet Operations

- Understands the use of a “declared false start” in a meet in which scratch rules are in effect for time trials.
- Develops a post-scratch time line
- Reviews and approve heat sheets prior to distribution
- Develops a feel for what Issues are arising
- Proactive approach (relay, distance check-in, other deadlines, requirements, etc...)
- Dealing with coaches questions and concerns
- Opens/closes scratch period in a timely fashion for each event. Coordinates announcements with the Announcer.
- Understands the use of a “declaration of intent to scratch.”
- Reviews final seedings before heat sheet is sent for printing.
- Understands “no-show” penalty if in effect and notifies coaches of affected athletes.
- Approves results for distribution to posting, announcing and archiving
- Scratches from Prelims/Finals - deadlines
- Disqualifications/No Shows

Please keep the following in mind as you progress through your training.

(1) Avail yourself of the knowledge of those with whom you are training. Ask questions, and ask different Referees the same question. You might find that there are multiple ways to handle a given situation; and frequently a better or best way to handle the situation.

(2) Practice preventative officiating and minimize reactive officiating. It is much easier to prevent a problem than it is to dig yourself out of one.