



2022

## **Inclusivity In Usa Swimming: A Sport For Every Ability**

Ellie Anne Roche

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INCLUSIVITY IN USA SWIMMING: A SPORT FOR EVERY ABILITY

by

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Advisor: Sarah Nielsen, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA

Occupational Therapy Doctorate, University of North Dakota, 2022

A Scholarly Project

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Occupational Therapy Doctorate

Grand Forks, North Dakota

May 2022

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This Scholarly Project Paper, submitted by Ellie Roche, OTDS in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Occupational Therapy Doctorate from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and hereby approved.

*Sarah Nielsen, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA*

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Sarah Nielsen

4/19/2022

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Date

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Ellie Roche

Date: 4/19/2022

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my Scholarly Project advisor, Dr. Sarah Nielsen for her guidance and encouragement throughout the development of this project. I would also like to acknowledge the support I have gained from the USA Swimming North Dakota Local Swimming Committee, including its outstanding coaches, families, and athletes.

To my grandmother Pat Roche,

Proud University of North Dakota nursing alumni and the light who inspired my healthcare path.



## **Abstract**

There is a significant need for youth with disabilities to increase their participation in meaningful activities such as sport. However, several barriers exist which limit participation for youth with disabilities within sport including a lack of education for coaches on disability inclusion, non-accessible facilities, and lack of awareness regarding sport-related accommodations. The purpose of this project was to identify methods in which the USA Swimming (USA-S) organization could better support the inclusion of athletes of all abilities outside of disability-only sports programs.

Through a literature review guided by the EHP framework, the author identified benefits of disability-inclusive sports teams as well as effective methods for implementation. Identified benefits for the child with the disability included enhanced social, physical, and cognitive skills, as well as supported transition into adulthood. Identified barriers for disability-inclusion included lack of education for coaches regarding athletes with disabilities as well as non-accessible facilities.

Throughout the project the author collaborated with a local USA-S swimming team in West Fargo, North Dakota to analyze current coaching methods, needs, and to pilot disability-inclusive resources. Results of the project have led to the development of the Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities. The manual includes disability-inclusive resources nested within a five-part organizational structure which includes: the Readiness for Change Assessment, the Need to Know Disability Resources, the Sharpening Skills, the Venue Accessibility Checklist, and the Venue Accessibility Statement Framework. The manual supports inclusion of

athletes of all abilities within the sport of swimming by eliminating barriers and providing educational resources to USA-S coaches and their teams. This is an important step towards aligning with the USA-S Disability Committee's mission statement regarding the involvement of people with disabilities apart from disability-only opportunities.

## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

There is a significant need for youth with disabilities to increase their participation in meaningful activities such as sport. Inclusive sports may contribute to greater involvement in civic life and strengthened communities (Craig et al., 2019) as well as a decreased stigma surrounding disabilities (Powers, 2014). Teamwork skills, social skills, and motor skill development are among other skills that inclusive sports may offer individuals with disabilities (Woodworth, 2016). Participation in sports not only enhances social, physical, and cognitive skills of the participant with a disability, but it may also translate to improvements in everyday skills and aid in the transition into adulthood (Liljenquist et al., 2017; Powers, 2014).

However, youth with disabilities have traditionally faced barriers that inhibit their participation in sport. Current barriers include a lack of coaching education and funding for adaptive equipment (Roult et al., 2015), safety concerns for specific disabilities (Powers, 2014), and extensive caregiver support required during activities (Schleien et al., 2014). Exclusion from participation omits this population from the numerous benefits that sport offers and may set youth even further behind in the development of life skills, which is why methods for further inclusion within sport are necessary.

Swimming is unique among competitive sports, in which inclusion for athletes with various disabilities is supported by the context of the water and the individualism of the sport. USA Swimming (USA-S) aims to promote safe and healthy opportunities for athletes of all abilities to competitively participate in the sport. According to USA-S's Diversity Equity and

Inclusion (DEI) committee, the goal for inclusion is to make the sport more welcoming (USA Swimming, 2021a). USA-S works alongside a variety of disability-specific athletic organizations such as Paralympics, Deaflympics, Special Olympic, etc., however, as an inclusive organization USA-S offers athletes of all abilities opportunities to engage with typically developing peers. Article 105 under USA-S defines four categories of disability that are used for making accommodations during competitions. These categories include visually impaired and blind, hard of hearing and deaf, physical disabilities, and cognitive disabilities (USA-S, 2021b). Along with other necessary individual accommodations, these categories offer general guidelines for ruling and officiating competition.

This project sought to understand inclusive sports with regards to USA-S. In order to do this, a literature matrix was conducted by the author. Based on the needs identified in the literature matrix, current barriers include a lack of coaching education and funding for adaptive equipment (Roult et al., 2015), safety concerns for specific disabilities (Powers, 2014), and extensive caregiver support required during activities (Schleien et al., 2014). Exclusion from participation omits this population from the numerous benefits that sport offers and may set youth even further behind in the development of life skills, which is why methods for further inclusion within sport are necessary. Through the development of a product, the Coaches' Manual for All Abilities, the author hopes to enhance the skills of the swimming coach as well as make resources for accessible facilities. The overall goal of this product is to increase the opportunities for USA-S teams to be more inclusive, thus creating space for swimmers of all abilities to participate.

## **Application of Theoretical Framework**

Based on current literature regarding the population and task at hand, it was identified that the EHP framework was the best fit for the needs of athletes with disabilities (Dunn, 2017). EHP focuses on the environment, also considered the context, and its impacts on a person's occupational performance within a task (Dunn, 2017). Within this model are five various interventions including establish/restore, adapt/modify, alter, prevent, and create (Dunn, 2017). The goal with the use of these intervention methods is to cause shifts within the context (environment), person, and task to result in the most beneficial occupational performance. In regard to this project, the athlete with the disability was the person, the context was the USA-S organization, and the task was the sport of swimming. EHP relates to the goals of inclusive sports teams because it focuses on expanding the performance range of the individual in order to increase their participation in meaningful tasks.

## **Key Terminology**

The following terms are used throughout the product and helped to guide the literature review. These terms are defined below.

- **Club:** An organization with membership in USA-S (USA-S, 2021b).
- **Disability:** A permanent physical or mental impairment that substantially limits participation in one or more major life activities. A swimmer with a temporary injury or minor impairment such as musculoskeletal injuries, range of motion impairment in joints, asthma, etc., does not qualify under the disability category. Disability is categorized in four groups under USA-S including physical, cognitive, visual, and hearing disabilities (USA-S, 2021b).
- **Event:** A race in a given swimming stroke or distance (USA-S, 2021b).

- **Facility:** Also referred to as venue. The areas surrounding the pool, including but not limited to the pool deck, spectator seating, locker rooms, entrance, and parking area (USA-S, 2021b).
- **Modification:** In the context of the sport of swimming, it is the adjustments to the technique of swimming or use of accessible equipment that allows for participation for swimmers with a disability. It does not aid in buoyancy or speed of the swimmer (USA-S, 2021b).
- **Practice:** The instruction of swimming techniques, skills, knowledge etc. (USA-S, 2021b).
- **Swimmer:** The athlete participating in the sport of swimming at any competitive level.
- **Swimming:** A competitive sport that takes place in a pool and includes various distances and rules for the completion of freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly strokes. In this context, legal rules of the sport are in accordance with USA-S.
- **USA Swimming (USA-S):** The national governing body for the sport of swimming in the United States of America (USA-S, 2021b).

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

Through the lens of the EHP framework, current literature regarding the barriers and supports of inclusive sports was analyzed to identify a need. EHP is a person-centered framework that addresses the relationship among the person, task, and context and their operative impact on a person's performance in a specific task (Dunn, 2017). Regarding the four concepts within EHP, the task was the sport of swimming, the person was the swimmer with a disability, the context was the organization of USA-S, and the performance was the outcome of the athlete's experience within the sport. Using current literature, the task of swimming was analyzed to identify the skills necessary to participate in the sport of swimming, including conditions such as physical and cognitive skills of the athlete and coach. Literature was also used to address the person, referred to as the swimmer with a disability, and their person factors which influence the task itself and the quality of task performance (Dunn, 2017). Likewise, the context of USA-S was analyzed by addressing the organization's current supports and barriers which either helped or hindered athletes with disabilities. Various contextual factors such as temporal, physical, social, and cultural aspects were addressed. The goal of the literature review was to address a need within the performance of swimmers with disabilities in the sport. Through assessment of current literature, the dynamic interaction among the person, task, and context, the current performance range for swimmers with disabilities was able to be evaluated.

## **Task: Swimming**

Tasks are an objective set of behaviors necessary to accomplish a goal (Dunn, 2017). With respect to the sport of swimming, the task requires propulsion of oneself through water by using one's arms, legs, and abdomen. Participation in swimming requires physical skills such as muscle engagement and range of motion throughout the body, varying degrees of aerobic skill, and a range of cognitive skills. Swimming includes four main strokes: butterfly, breaststroke, backstroke, and freestyle, which can be combined into a medley event, or can be swum separately at various lengths. Each stroke in competitive swimming has specific guidelines for legal arm and leg movements, as well as regulations for the starts and turns within each event. Swimming races can be both individual and can take place in the form of four-person relay events. The specific guidelines for swimming competitions, coaching certifications, qualification standards, management of club swim teams, and accommodations for swimmers with disabilities are regulated by USA-S (USA-S, 2022). Regarding accommodations necessary for swimmers with disabilities to participate in the sport, the organization has clear protocols in place for officiating approved modified strokes during competition, referred to as Article 105, which is located within the USA-S Rules and Regulation handbook (USA-S, 2021b).

The progression of participating in competitive swimming typically begins with learning basic swimming skills such as floating and having efficient body position in the water. There are well prescribed methods for learning to swim from organizations that offer swimming lessons for both youth and adults. Red Cross for example, offers swimming lessons in a progression of levels one through six; level one beginning with an introduction of water skills and focusing on comfort in the water and level six ending with proficiency and endurance while swimming all four strokes (American Red Cross, 2022). Once basic knowledge of swimming is obtained and



mastered through organized swimming lessons or through other means of instruction, the person may be prepared to seek participation on a competitive club swimming team.

Club swimming teams under USA-S begin their coaching instruction with the assumption that the swimmer has some level of mastery of skills within the task of swimming. This skill level may range from a swimmer having limited swimming skills to a swimmer who may have knowledge and experience swimming all four strokes, turns, and or starts. Training groups within USA-S club teams are typically classified individually by each club and range from beginner levels to elite competitor levels. The specific skills required to participate in the training groups are typically outlined on the club swimming team's website. For example, the West Fargo Flyers club swimming team in North Dakota has several graded training groups starting with Developmental 1, which focuses on basic instruction of stroke development, advancing to the Senior group, which requires attendance of at least four practices per week and the ability to maintain strong swimming technique during timed interval practices (West Fargo Flyers, 2022).

### **Person: Swimmer**

According to EHP, the person is comprised of their past experiences, personal values and interests, as well as their sensorimotor, cognitive, and psychosocial skills (Dunn, 2017). The combination of these facets creates the person factors. The person factors are an integral part of consideration when addressing a person's performance in a task within a certain context. Person factors were considered when analyzing current literature in order to identify the skills required of an athlete with a disability to participate in swimming, as well as the degree of quality of their performance.

A person's performance in a task is strongly influenced by the value of meaning they attach to the task (Dunn, 2017). Likewise, an important aspect of a child's personal value comes

from their engagement in meaningful activities such as sport. However, for children with disabilities, seeking engagement within sport can be challenging. Youth athletes with disabilities often feel isolated and discouraged when seeking out opportunities for engagement in sport (Schleien et al., 2014). Additionally, these athletes may be less interested in participating if they do not see role models or peers who look like themselves in their sport (Storm et al., 2017). When a child is accepted and participates in inclusive settings, the negative stigma and fears associated with special needs decreases (Powers, 2014) and the child has a positive experience. However, children with disabilities will only benefit from inclusive experiences that are socially inclusive, and sports may be one way to bridge this gap (Adams, 2017).

Children with disabilities benefit from participation in inclusive sports through the development of a variety of skills. Psychosocial skills that the child gains include increased teamwork skills and social learning (Woodworth, 2016) along with higher self-esteem, pride, and confidence (Aytur et al., 2018). The child may also benefit from strengthened relationships with their peers, family members, and others (Mishin, 2015). They may even discover a new role identification as an athlete through inclusive sports, as opposed to solely identifying as a person with a disability (Aytur et al., 2018). Cognitive skills that a child with a disability may enhance as a result of participation in inclusive sports include increased cortical function (Mishin, 2015) and direction following (Woodworth, 2016). A child's motor skills are also further developed through inclusive sports (Woodworth, 2016). In turn, these skills can translate towards improvements in everyday skills and may aid in the transition into adulthood (Liljenquist et al., 2017; Powers, 2014). Along with the benefits for the child with the disability, inclusive sports also teach typically performing children important skills such as learning differences about peers and being flexible (Woodworth, 2016).

Youth athletes in USA-S range from five to 18 years of age. These athletes participate throughout the country as members of USA-S's over 3,100 club swimming teams, which encompasses more than 400,000 members (USA-S, 2022). Swimmers who are members of USA-S encompass a wide range of physical and mental abilities. These athletes may identify as having either diagnosed or undiagnosed disabilities which may or may not require accommodations within the sport. Disabilities are impairments of the mind or body that create difficulties for a person's participation in certain activities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). Athletes with disabilities who are members of USA-S are classified into four categories: visually impaired and blind, hard of hearing and deaf, physical disabilities, and cognitive disabilities. A person who has a cognitive disability may have trouble with skills such as learning, problem solving, communicating, or completing activities of daily living (Santiago Perez & Crowe 2021). A person who has a physical disability may have impaired aspects of their mobility, coordination, or strength. Disabilities can also present in a person's physical senses like vision or hearing, which impair the person's ability to interact and respond to their environment. Swimmers with disabilities are entitled to fair accommodations within the sport due to their personal limitations and classification of disability; these accommodations are housed within Article 105 (USA-S, 2021b) which displays the criteria for disabilities and their approved accommodations for ruling during competition. Because an athlete may be faced with various obstacles due to the nature of their disability, it is imperative that their context supports their performance and abilities.

### **Context: USA Swimming**

The context is regarded as the conditions that surround a person, providing both supports and barriers to a person's performance (Dunn, 2017). Contexts operate external to the person;

however, contexts continually impact the person's actions and options (Dunn, 2017).

Furthermore, contexts may be temporal, physical, social, or cultural, and also include the materials and resources that are needed to engage in tasks (Dunn, 2017). They also include the people who assist in the person's performance of tasks, such as coaches who are requisite within sport. Environments in which a child with a disability interacts, have the power to either foster participation or eliminate participation in physical activity (Roult et al., 2015).

There are many cultural context barriers to inclusive participation in sports that are evident in organizational laws. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was designed to end discrimination and provide opportunities for those with disabilities through government funded programs. For a program that does not receive federal funding, they are obligated to offer alternative options for participation of kids in need (Powers, 2014). Under this Act is Section 504, which ensures that public schools provide free and appropriate public education, modifications, accommodations, and other specialized services for children with special needs to participate in school (Rehabilitation Act, 1973). Currently, most sports within public schools fail to include students of different abilities which leaves special needs athletes to look for sporting opportunities outside of the school setting (Powers, 2014). Swimming is one activity which largely resides outside of the public-school domain, and within private or non-profit club organizations. Regarding the cultural context of the sport of swimming within the United States, USA-S acts as the governing body of the sport. The organization provides many supports and resources for athletes, families, coaches, officials, and volunteers to participate at several levels of competition (USA-S, 2022). USA-S also includes various committees which focus on assisting more vulnerable or traditionally underserved populations within swimming community. The Disability Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committees are organized at the national, zone, and

local swim community (LSC) levels (USA-S, 2022). The overarching goal for inclusion of athletes according to USA-S (2022) is to promote a welcoming environment and offer opportunities for participation in competitive sport outside of disability-exclusive organizations, while at the same time creating a fair and accessible experience. Inclusion is supported through USA-S's DEI committees by creating guidelines for fair and equitable accommodations for swimmers with disabilities. Article 105 in the USA-S Rules and Regulation handbook outlines the specific actions that swimmers and their coaches must complete prior to competition to ensure that the Meet Referee appropriately judges their swimming (starts, turns, form, etc.) as maintained by the athlete's accommodations and disability (USA-S, 2021a). These accommodations help to support participation by creating reasonable modifications that are specific to the person and their disability.

Physical context barriers such as non-accessible facilities impact an athlete's ability to utilize athletic amenities (Roult et al., 2015). This may include spaces such as pool decks or locker rooms, which are crucial components of being able to participate on swimming teams. On the other hand, within the sport of swimming, the physical context of water supports swimmers who have disabilities by allowing them to move through space in ways that may not be possible on land (Moffatt, 2017).

The influence of the temporal context within inclusive sports presents some barriers for athletes with disabilities. The fast-paced rate and intensity of competitive sports may be a safety concern for athletes who have impairments with coordination, cognition, or strength due to their disability (Powers, 2014). In many cases direct support is required for athletes with disabilities to participate in inclusive sports, which requires extensive time commitments from family members who typically are the caretaker for the child (Schleien et al., 2014). Similarly, the time

commitment required for making accommodations and change within the sport in order to be inclusive may also be a barrier. In one case athletes who were able-bodied expressed frustration when participating on inclusive teams because of the slower-paced, lower intensity that they experienced during athletic competition (Roult et al., 2015).

Resources such as funding also pose barriers for inclusive sports. Communities where low socioeconomic and minority populations reside are often lower funded and have less resources to maintain swimming teams (Storm et al., 2017). Cost of aquatic facilities, inconsistency of swim team availability, and limited knowledge regarding the sport are also barriers for community swim teams (Storm et al., 2017). Lack of funding for adaptive equipment as well as facility modifications also limit the success of inclusive sports (Roult et al., 2015).

The social context of inclusive sports shows many positive supports for the communities in which they take place. Inclusive sports assist communities by increasing awareness about unique abilities and strengths of individuals with disabilities (Craig et al., 2019) as well as creating a more positive outlook on the special needs' populations (Merrells et al., 2018). Inclusive sports also contribute to greater participation for special needs folks in civic life (Craig et al., 2019). Inclusive sports may even offer communities decreased rates of poverty and chronic illness and improve rates of gender equity and education (Craig et al., 2019). Similarly, for the child with the disability, inclusive settings are only beneficial if they are socially inclusive (Adams, 2017). The performance of club swimming teams is also greatly influenced by the interrelated actions among parents, athletes, and coaches.

One of the most valuable influences on the success of an athlete is their coach. The methods, attitudes, and even availability of coaches can either support or pose barriers for an athlete's performance. Best-practice coaching methods are essential for instructing athletes

within the sport towards character development and athletic gains. In one study by Roult et al. (2015), the lack of volunteers and coaches who were educated in coaching youth with different needs impacted the success of the inclusive sports team. It is also the role of coaches to assist in creating accommodations for athletes with special needs. Under the organization of USA-S, Article 105 (USA-S, 2021b) states that swimming coaches are responsible for making accommodations for athletes in accordance with recommendations from their medical providers, which are based on the individual athlete's disability. Another responsibility method of coaching that has been found effective is implementing routines and utilizing physical demonstrations when instructing athletes (Woodworth, 2016). Other effective coaching methods for this population include abilities-based approaches emphasizing common goals and interests among all participants, master-oriented instruction, individualized instruction, and incorporating activities that are equally developmentally appropriate as they are challenging (Arbour-Nicitopoulos et al., 2018). Regarding the perspective of coaches and their preferred learning styles, needs were identified in the following areas: more structured coaching courses, opportunities for learning from mentors, increased administration support, and continued self-explored learning opportunities (MacDonald et al., 2016). Coaches also identified that they learn best through doing and through consultation with other coaches (MacDonald et al., 2016). As for designing the structure for inclusive sports teams that are supportive and successful, including the perspective and input from the parents and caregivers of athletes with disabilities is important (Schleien et al., 2014).

## **Performance**

A person's performance within a task is considered both the process and the result of the interaction between the person and their contexts. The performance range of a person is the

quantity of tasks that are available to the person, and it is contingent on both the person factors of the individual as well as their context variables (Dunn, 2017). According to the literature review, performance for athletes with disabilities is currently limited by a lack of education for coaches, lack of resources, lack of funding, and various challenges associated with a person's specific disability.

On the other hand, current supports for inclusive sports that were identified in the literature included clear guidelines on accommodations for swimmers with disabilities under Article 105 (USA-S, 2021b), the development of various psychosocial, cognitive, and motor skills for the participant, USA-S's DEI committee, the nature of the water which allows for movement that is not possible on land, greater community awareness and engagement for all populations, and effective coaching methods. Further, current barriers were identified as negative feelings from athletes with disabilities when seeking out inclusive sporting opportunities, non-accessible sporting facilities, expensive adaptive equipment, extensive time requirement for support services for the athlete, safety concerns within the sport itself, and inexperienced or uneducated coaching staff.

In order to increase a person's performance range and thus target the current barriers that are faced by athletes in inclusive sports, the following intervention methods presented by Dunn (2017) under the EHP model would be used: establish/restore, alter, adapt/modify, prevent, and create. According to EHP, the establish/restore intervention focuses on person factors, particularly improving a person's skills. Under the alter intervention, the context of the person is analyzed so that the best fit among the person and the context can be identified. Adapt/modify intervention requires adjustments within either the context or the task itself, which may look like accommodations to make the environment more accessible or accommodations to make a task



more easily performed. The prevent intervention is the preemptive approach that changes the person, task, or context in order to prevent a negative outcome. Last of the interventions is create, which aims at creating circumstances for optimal performance of all persons. These interventions in regard to the literature review are represented in the Chapter III, Methods.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

A literature review regarding inclusive sports was conducted to determine a need for a product that would support inclusion for swimmers with disabilities on swimming teams. The driving motivation for the development of this product was a combined result of the author's academic education in the fields of special education and occupational therapy, as well as the author's experience as a competitive swimmer and current USA-S club coach. Upon further research, it was evident that athletes who have disabilities face several barriers when it comes to participating on sporting teams. This is particularly true within the sport of swimming, where participation for all abilities is accepted but not fully demonstrated. The influences that were identified in the literature review led to the author's interest in developing a product which would support the inclusion of swimmers with all categories of disability within the sport. The components within the methods chapter include the theory chosen to guide the project, the evaluation process regarding the literature on the barriers and supports within inclusive sports, and the steps that were completed for the development of the product.

Following the identification of the need within inclusive sports, a model of theory was chosen. Identifying a guiding theory was essential in order to utilize an effective lens for analyzing literature, as well as considering ideas for product development. Several models were considered at the beginning of this project; however, one model was the best fit considering the goals of the author as well as the product. The Ecological Model of Occupation emphasizes the essential role of context as well as the relationships among person, context, and task on the

participation among the person, context and task (Dunn, 2017). EHP was used to identify supports and barriers within the current literature surrounding inclusive sports and the sport of swimming. The task was considered the sport of swimming, the person was considered the swimmer, and the context addressed specific features within the organization of USA-S. Combined, these three aspects create a multifaceted perspective of performance (Dunn, 2017), which was referred.

The author conducted a literature review to identify inclusion of athletes with disabilities within USA-S and to identify potential barriers and supports. Literature was also utilized to understand the skills required of a person to participate in the sport of swimming and to discover the best-practice methods for coaching athletes who have disabilities. The terms, “inclusion in sports”, “youth with disabilities”, “benefits of inclusion”, “coaching athletes with disabilities”, and “swim team” were searched using the databases: Google Scholar, PubMed, and CINAHL. Other credible websites that were searched for reliable resources regarding swimming and inclusion within sports were: USA-S, Team USA Paralympics, and the West Fargo Flyers team unify website. Notable documents that were referenced throughout the project included the Americans with Disabilities Act and Article 105 of the USA-S Rules & Regulations handbook. Interviews with experts in the field of swimming and disability were conducted with various individuals including a local head swimming coach of the West Fargo Flyers, a North Dakota LSC chairperson, the Central Zone Disability chairperson, and a USA-S Disability chairperson with experience coaching swimmers with visual impairments.

Several gaps within the realm of inclusive sports and the context of USA-S were identified from the literature review. These gaps included a lack of education for coaches regarding athletes of different abilities, a lack accessible facilities and funding for

accommodations, and the various challenges associated with a person's specific disability. The EHP framework outlines five intervention approaches which assist in targeting factors of the person/context/task to enhance performance (Dunn, 2017). Although EHP is traditionally considered an occupational therapy framework, its design is intended to support interprofessional collaboration among various fields (Dunn, 2017). One example of this can be seen in the terminology of "task" which is a more widely understood term used to describe the occupations. EHP uses five intervention approaches which target various features of the person, context and task. The EHP intervention approaches include establish/restore which addresses changes within the person, adapt/modify and alter which target the context and task, and lastly prevent and create which address any or all three features (Dunn, 2017).

Table III was created to represent the relationship among the EHP intervention method and the corresponding goals for disability-inclusion as identified from the literature review. Table III presents evidence based strategies for implementing the goals within the swimming team. 10 goals and 10 evidence based strategies are listed within Table III, however, strategies that were utilized within the product are listed in bolded text. Strategies that are not listed in bolded text are future recommendations for USA-S.

**Table III: Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities**

EHP Intervention Approach	Goal	Evidence Based Strategies
<p><b><u>Establish/Restore</u></b> Targets the person factors, particularly improving a person's skills. This includes establishing new skills or restoring other skills that may have been lost or underdeveloped due to injury, illness, or disability (Dunn, 2017).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coaches will be able to apply abilities-based, team-goal oriented, and master-oriented instruction approaches when coaching athletes of all abilities (Arbour-Nicitopoulos et al., 2018).</li> <li>2. Coaches will be able to instruct athletes of all abilities using developmentally appropriate and challenging instruction methods (Arbour-Nicitopoulos et al., 2018).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide monthly resources for the continuing education of coaches regarding the use of abilities-based, team-goal oriented, and/or master-oriented instruction methods. This may be in the form of a podcasts, books, journal articles, group discussions, etc.</li> <li>2. <b>Implement teaching tips for coaches within a scheduled newsletter which targets improved team communication and disability awareness.</b></li> </ol>
<p><b><u>Alter</u></b> Finds the best match among person and context. It does not change the context itself, but rather will place the person into the most supportive context (Dunn, 2017).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Coaches will be able to place swimmers in training groups that are equally challenging and developmentally appropriate (Arbour-Nicitopoulos et al., 2018).</li> <li>4. Coaches will be able to identify barriers to accessibility within their facilities to inform other teams within the LSC (USA-S, 2021a).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Create clear skills-based expectations for identified training groups on the swim team.</li> <li>4. <b>Create a Venue Accessibility Checklist for teams to assess the accessibility of their pool venues. Results could be used as a reference for future facility</b></li> </ol>

		<b>renovations or could be shared with participating LSC teams to spread awareness about accessibility.</b>
<p><b><u>Adapt/Modify</u></b> Adjusts the context or the task through various accommodations to enhance the person's performance (Dunn, 2017).</p>	<p>5. Coaches will be able to make accommodations for adaptive equipment use during practice that are appropriate for ability and skill level of the swimmer (USA-S, 2021a).</p> <p>6. Coaches will be able to assist in making accommodations for swimming competition that are suitable to the ability of the swimmer (USA-S, 2021a).</p>	<p>5. Create a resource of modified swimming equipment that is appropriate for both the level of the swimmer and the specific disability. This may also include information about how to use equipment, where to purchase equipment, or how to make equipment from previous resources.</p> <p><b>6. Create a quick-reference resource with information on current ADA laws as well as disability-specific accommodations under Article 105 (USA-S, 2021b).</b></p>
<p><b><u>Prevent</u></b> Attempts to fix problems before they begin. Changes the person, task, or context to prevent future challenges (Dunn, 2017).</p>	<p>7. Coaches will be able to identify a need for inclusion of athletes of all abilities within their own swim team (USA-S, 2021a).</p>	<p><b>7. Assess readiness for change for inclusion within the swim team by completing the Readiness for Change Assessment. The measure will quantify a team's awareness about disability-inclusion as well as their readiness for disability-inclusion changes.</b></p>

<p><b><u>Create</u></b> Creates circumstances that optimize performance. It does not assume that a problem exists or will occur, but rather has the best interest for all populations that are participating. Targets person, context, or task, or a combination of variables (Dunn, 2017).</p>	<p>8. USA-S teams will be able to identify barriers and supports to accessibility within their own facilities (USA-S, 2021a).</p> <p>9. USA-S teams will be able to communicate information regarding the accessibility of their facilities for visiting teams when hosting competitions (USA-S, 2021a).</p> <p>10. USA-S teams will be able to make accommodations to their pool space to be inclusive and accessible for all abilities of swimmers (USA-S, 2021a).</p>	<p>8. Create recommendations for universal design in pool spaces. This could be done through a checklist assessment for swim teams to assess their own accessibility features.</p> <p><b>9. Create a framework for a venue accessibility statement to be included within the meet information for hosting swim teams. Information would include access to parking, restrooms, pool deck, and other facility features.</b></p> <p>10. Create a checklist for modifications that may be made on pool decks and surrounding spaces to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities. This checklist may range from simple, inexpensive accommodations, to more complex recommendations that would require funding.</p>
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## **Chapter IV**

### **Product**

Chapter IV introduces the product, Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities. The product was created from the identified needs of the literature review regarding inclusive sports within the realm of USA-S. The needs that were identified included a lack of education for coaches regarding athletes of different abilities, a lack of accessible facilities, and various disability-specific challenges of athletes within sport. The purpose of the product is to increase the inclusive opportunities for athletes with disabilities to participate in USA-S club teams through a series of evidence-based goals and strategies. The Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities will target various contexts within USA-S club teams by preparing them with resources and skills to lead inclusive swimming programs. Specific strategies that are presented within the product include the Readiness for Change Assessment, the Need to Know Disability Resources, the Sharpening Skills, the Venue Accessibility Checklist, and the Venue Accessibility Statement Framework.

The EHP framework guided the development of this product by providing an understanding for the contextual features within USA-S. EHP also provided specific intervention methods to target the performance of the swimmer within the sport (Dunn, 2017). Each intervention method within EHP is represented in relation to the goals and strategies of the product/toolkit within Table III of the Methods chapter. EHP was an appropriate model to use for this product because of its usability within various fields and areas of practice.



The product will target the identified needs of USA-S through a series of strategies with evidence-based goals. The overarching goal of the product is to increase the skills of the swimming coach regarding disability-inclusion within their team. In turn, positively impacting the performance of the swimmer with a disability by providing them with necessary supports. The Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities is provided in the Appendix.

## **Chapter V**

### **Summary**

There is a need for an increase in resources to support inclusive sports teams for athletes with disabilities (Craig et al., 2019; Powers, 2014; Roult et al., 2015). The purpose of this project was to provide resources for USA-S coaches so that they are better prepared to work with athletes with disabilities, and thus are able to more effectively coach an inclusive team. Through the use of the Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities, a coach is provided with literature-informed resources for supporting the inclusion of athletes with disabilities. In turn, athletes with disabilities are provided more opportunities to benefit from the impact of participating in sports and are able to engage with typically developing peers.

Current literature regarding the benefits and gaps for inclusive sports teams was analyzed through the EHP framework (Dunn, 2017). Findings from the literature were then used to guide the contents within the Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities. The first section, Readiness for Change Assessments Part 1 & Part 2, aims to promote self-reflection and dialogue surrounding coaches' current knowledge about disability inclusion on their team. The next section, Need to Know Disability Resources, provides compiled information regarding legalities for people with disabilities surrounding the sport of swimming. Included in Sharpening Skills are educational infographics intended to improve communication and awareness about disability accommodations. The final two portions of the product, the Venue Accessibility Checklist and the Venue Accessibility Statement, were created to be used collaboratively to inform all users of the pool about the accessibility of the venue. The goal of the Venue Accessibility Checklist was

to document the accessibility of the venue and in return, the Venue Accessibility Statement provided a framework for communicating the accessibility within the Meet Information for teams hosting competitions.

The Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities included several strengths for its goal of targeting coaching effectiveness for swimmers with disabilities. One of these strengths included the focus of enhancing communication among parents through newsletter prompts, as seen in the Sharpening Skills section. This was inspired by literature from Schleien et al. (2014) which found positive supports for the child in inclusive programs when incorporating the parents' perspective. Another strength was the inclusion of alternative methods for promoting coaching knowledge, which was an identified need (MacDonald et al., 2016). This was demonstrated through the variety of materials (visual aids, handouts, self-reflective assessments, etc.) included throughout the product. Furthermore, the experiences of the author within the sport of swimming as both a former athlete and current USA-S certified coach has led to a unique perspective for the formulation of this product. Perspectives that influenced the Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities included reflections upon coaching strategies as analyzed from the West Fargo Flyers swim practices, as well as observations from swimming competitions, board meetings, and further conversations with stakeholders of the USA-S organization. An overall strength of the Manual was its alignment with the goals of the USA-S organization, which looks to incorporate swimmers with disabilities into their program and promote inclusion of all people (USA-S, 2021a).

Some limitations exist within the Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities. Among these include the constraints of time which impacted the amount of feedback from the pilot swimming team, the limited exposure to coaching methods utilized outside of the West Fargo

Flyers swimming team, and the limited research on the topic of inclusive swimming programs. Regarding further action within the product, the hope of the author is that the Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities acts as a starting place for the promotion of disability-inclusion within the sport of swimming. The product may be enhanced through feedback from the USA-S organization, as well as further feedback from other pilot swimming clubs outside of the West Fargo Flyers. Aspects that may be added for increased impact of the product might include: coaching seminars or courses, disability-inclusive swimming camps, or outreach programs for spreading awareness about inclusive sporting opportunities within local communities. Largely, the Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities would benefit from the inclusion of further research regarding effective measures of implementing disability-inclusive swimming programs.

Preceding the application of these recommendations within the product, it is important that dialogue surrounding disability inclusion within the sport and society as a whole is continued. The inclusion of people with disabilities within their communities remains widely impacted by negative stigmas surrounding the population. Increasing conversations regarding the cause of these biases, their influence, and steps for further action can support movement towards true inclusion. It is the hope of the author that by providing resources for the swimming community a small step towards true disability-inclusion can be made.

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## Appendix

**Educational Resources & Methods For Disability Inclusion**

# **SWIMMING COACHES' MANUAL FOR ALL ABILITIES**

- **READINESS FOR CHANGE ASSESSMENT**
- **NEED TO KNOW DISABILITY RESOURCES**
- **SHARPENING SKILLS**
- **VENUE ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST**
- **VENUE ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT**

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# SWIMMING COACHES' MANUAL FOR ALL ABILITIES

## INTRODUCTION

The author developed this product as part of a Doctoral Experiential Placement (DEP) for a doctoral degree in occupational therapy. The DEP involved the completion of a theory-driven scholarly project. The theory that drove the development of the Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities was the Ecology of Human Performance (EHP) (Dunn, 2017). EHP was used to identify gaps in literature surrounding disability-inclusivity in sports. Identified gaps that limited the success of disability-inclusive sports teams included non-accessible sporting facilities and lack of education for coaches surrounding athletes with special needs (Roult et al., 2015). Thus, these gaps formed the fundamental purpose for the Manual within the sport of swimming.

The Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities is intended to support USA Swimming's (USA-S) mission for inclusion in which athletes of all abilities are able to grow within the sport of swimming together, rather than through participation in disability-specific organizations. This means that youth are not only exposed to peers who may look or act differently from themselves, but they are able to include these swimmers as fellow teammates. The goal of the Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities is to better prepare USA-S coaches for inclusion by providing them with education and resources that support disability inclusion. In return, pioneering a new standard for inclusion within youth sports. Ability-inclusive resources for coaches are nested within a five-part organizational structure of the Manual which includes:

- Readiness for Change Assessment
- Need to Know Disability Resources
- Sharpening Skills
- Venue Accessibility Checklist
- Venue Accessibility Statement: A Framework for Meet Information

### Google Docs Format

All Resources within the Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities are available as a Google Docs format within the link located here:

[Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities Google Docs Resources](#)

# READINESS FOR CHANGE ASSESSMENT

## Part 1 & Part 2

*Scenario: An athlete with a disability approaches you and says they would like to join your swim team. How prepared are you to coach this athlete? How will you meet their specific needs while maintaining the competitive goals of your program?*

This is the guiding concern behind the Readiness for Change Assessment. This assessment is designed for coaching staff members to analyze their preparedness for the inclusion of athletes with disabilities. The assessment includes two parts:

1. Part 1, the group discussion, contains open-ended group questions intended to spark conversation and reflection among the entire coaching team.
2. Part 2, the individual assessment, targets the coach as an individual and their personal strengths or needs regarding disability-inclusion.

Results from both the group discussion and the individual assessment may be used to interpret a need for continued education regarding coaching and including athletes of different abilities within the swimming team.

## READINESS FOR CHANGE ASSESSMENT

### PART 1: GROUP DISCUSSION

**Directions:** With a facilitator, discuss the following questions as a coaching team. Following the dialogue, identify 1-2 action steps for the group to implement to increase inclusivity for swimmers of all abilities.

#### Readiness for Change Assessment Part 1: Group Discussion

1. In your own words, what is the mission of your team?
2. What do you believe are good qualities of a swimming member on your team?
3. How do coaches on your team lead in a way that aligns with the team's mission and goals for athlete expectations?
4. In what ways do you believe your team would benefit from being more disability-inclusive?
5. What are barriers that interfere with making your team more disability-inclusive?

## READINESS FOR CHANGE ASSESSMENT

### PART 2: INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT

**Directions:**

1. Take the 9-question Part 2 assessment individually. This can be done on within the Part 2 Assessment located on page 7 of the Manual, or it can be completed by clicking the Google Form link on page 7. Allow yourself adequate time for reflective responses.
2. Following the assessment, refer to Table Part 2B to guide you to specific resources within the Manual for corresponding assessment questions.



### Readiness for Change Assessment Part 2: Individual Assessment

Record your response to the questions as the following: *1-disagree, 2- disagree some, 3- agree some, 4- agree*

1. My team is responsible for being inclusive of swimmers of all abilities.

1      2      3      4

2. My team welcomes swimmers of all abilities.

1      2      3      4

3. Coaches on my team understand the role of Article 105 in the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations Handbook.

1      2      3      4

4. My team understands features of our venue that support its accessibility for all patrons.

1      2      3      4

5. My team understands features of our venue that hinder its accessibility for all patrons.

1      2      3      4

6. My coaching team understands modification or adaptations to welcome swimmers who are blind / visually impaired.

1      2      3      4

7. My coaching team understands how to use modifications or adaptations to welcome swimmers who are deaf / hard of hearing.

1      2      3      4

8. My coaching team understands how to use modifications or adaptations to welcome swimmers who have cognitive disabilities.

1      2      3      4

9. My coaching team understands how to use modifications or adaptations to welcome swimmers who have physical disabilities.

1      2      3      4

**Directions:** Following the completion of the individual assessment, use Table Part 2B to guide you towards further resources on disability inclusion throughout the Swimming Coaches' Manual for All Abilities.

**Table Part 2B:**

<b>Part 2B: Resources for the Individual Assessment</b>	
<b>Question 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to Know Disability Resources for Coaches, Part 1: ADA (pg. 11)</li> </ul>
<b>Question 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to Know Disability Resources for Coaches, Part 1: ADA (pg. 11)</li> </ul>
<b>Question 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to Know Disability Resources for Coaches, Part 2: Article 105 (pg. 12)</li> </ul>
<b>Question 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Venue Accessibility Checklist (pg. 24)</li> </ul>
<b>Question 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Venue Accessibility Checklist (pg. 24)</li> </ul>
<b>Question 6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharpening Skill Post #5: Blind &amp; Vision Loss Modifications (pg. 21)</li> </ul>
<b>Question 7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharpening Skill Post #4: Deaf &amp; Hard of Hearing Modifications (pg. 20)</li> </ul>
<b>Question 8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharpening Skill Post #6: Cognitive Disability Modifications (pg. 22)</li> </ul>
<b>Question 9</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharpening Skill Post #7: Physical Disability Modifications (pg. 23)</li> </ul>

# NEED TO KNOW DISABILITY RESOURCES

Parts 1, 2, & 3

**Why:** Do you know how federal laws impact your athletes? Are you aware of accommodations already in place by USA-S for swimmers with disabilities? The Need to Know Disability Resources are intended as a quick educational reference regarding laws and guidelines surrounding the sport that may affect your athletes with disabilities.

**Directions:** Distribute the infographics titled “What is ADA?”, “Article 105” and “USA-S Article 105 Quick Reference” to your coaching staff. These resources can be used for educational resources as well as a quick-reference document to have on hand.

## NEED TO KNOW DISABILITY RESOURCES

### PART 1: WHAT IS A.D.A.?

#### What is ADA?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that was enacted in 1990. The purpose of ADA is to protect people with disabilities from discrimination and provide opportunities to engage in civic life in all public areas, including private places that are open for public use (ADA National Network, 2022). ADA includes five titles, each with a different focus for public settings. Title II address public accommodations, which includes privately owned spaces that provide services to the public (ADA National Network, 2022). Under Title II, standards for accessibility are in place for new and existing facilities that are open to the public including swimming pools and facilities that may host USA Swimming competitions.

#### How Does ADA Relate to Swimming?

Because most swimming pools utilized by USA Swimming club organizations are considered public accommodations, these facilities are required to meet the standards of ADA accessibility. Accessibility implies that the amenities and spaces within a facility are able to be used by individuals with disabilities, just as they are available to use for any public person.

## WHAT IS A.D.A.?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil law enacted in 1990 that provides people with disabilities protection from discrimination.

### WHY IT MATTERS



People with disabilities are often faced with barriers that impact their daily lives. ADA provides requirements for accessibility within public areas that increases the opportunities for engagement for people of all abilities.

### TITLE II

ADA includes 5 titles for public setting requirements of accessibility. Title II addresses public accommodations, or facilities, which are either public or privately owned and open to the public. This includes spaces such as stores, hotels, restaurants, or public pools.

## IMPACT ON SWIMMING

ADA impacts any pool that is open to public use, including competition pools. Because USA Swimming includes members of all abilities, it is important that pool venues are accessible for all athletes, spectators, and support staff.

The information on this document was referenced from ADA.gov. Please visit their webpage at <https://www.ada.gov/> for more information regarding current legislature.

## NEED TO KNOW DISABILITY RESOURCES

### PART 2: ARTICLE 105

#### What is Article 105?

According to USA Swimming (2021b), Article 105 includes the guidelines and suggestions for modifications used by swimmers with disabilities. These modifications are granted by USA Swimming's Rules & Regulations for use by the meet Referee to judge swimming races in a way that is equitable for swimmers with disabilities. In this context, disability is regarded as a permanent physical or cognitive impairment that substantially limits performance in one or more major life activities.

#### How do Modifications Under Article 105 Work?

Modifications are not permitted to aid in the buoyancy or speed of the swimmer. They are, however, intended to support the swimmer by changing aspects of the swimming race such as:

- how the stroke is swum
- special assistance before or during races
- modifications to the start and turn.

Specific modifications for the category of disability (blind and vision loss, deaf and hard of hearing, cognitively disabled, and physical disabilities) are outlined in Article 105 of USA Swimming's Rules & Regulations and are summarized within this visual aid. It is important to note that other modifications for specific needs of the athlete may be made if approved by the meet Referee.

## ARTICLE 105

Included in USA Swimming's Rules & Regulations handbook, Article 105 outlines protocols for swimming modifications for athletes with disabilities.

### WHAT IS DISABILITY?

A disability is a permanent physical or cognitive impairment which limits participation in one or more daily life activities. USA Swimming classifies 4 disability categories:

1. Blind / Vision Loss
2. Deaf / Hard of Hearing
3. Cognitive Disability
4. Physical Disability



### HOW IT WORKS

Article 105 allows meet Referees to judge swimming races with approved disability-specific modifications. Modifications may not aid the swimmer in an unfair way. In order to qualify, athletes must have medical permission and notify the meet Referee prior to competition.

## INCLUSION IN SWIMMING

USA Swimming encourages inclusion for athletes of all abilities. Article 105 supports inclusion by giving swimmers with disabilities opportunities to participate in the sport in an equitable way.

For more information on Article 105, please visit <https://www.usaswimming.org/home/disability> or reference USA Swimming's Rules & Regulations handbook.

## NEED TO KNOW DISABILITY RESOURCES

### PART 3: ARTICLE 105 QUICK REFERENCE

USA-S Article 105 Quick Reference	
Disability Category	Accommodation Examples
Deaf / Hard of Hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strobe light on starting blocks</li><li>• Hand signals for starting races</li></ul>
Blind / Vision Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assistance onto blocks</li><li>• Swimmer may require use of blackout goggles, depending on performance category</li></ul>
Cognitive Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assistance onto blocks</li><li>• Longer time allotted to get positioned onto blocks</li></ul>
Physical Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assistance into/out of the water</li><li>• Single layer towel on top of blocks to prevent slipping</li><li>• Use of padded or slip-proof mat behind blocks/lane</li><li>• In-water start</li><li>• Longer time allotted to get positioned onto blocks</li></ul>

SWIMMING COACHES' MANUAL FOR ALL ABILITIES

# SHARPENING SKILLS

Resources for Enhancing Education

**Why:** The Sharpening Skills for coaches are intended to do two things: promote communication within the swim team and increase awareness about disabilities through USA Swimming's resources.

**Directions:** Distribute these Sharpening Skills posts within your regular coaching newsletters and emails. This may be done weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly throughout your swimming season.



## SHARPENING SKILL

### POST #1: WHY INCLUSION?

**Focus:** Disability Awareness.

**Why:** Many successful disability-only sports teams exist. However, USA Swimming sees the importance of integration for all ability levels within a sports team. The mission of the organization is to provide opportunities that are inclusive in all aspects, including disability inclusivity. Inclusion is important because each swimmer, no matter what their ability level may be, deserves the same opportunity to participate within sport.

## WHY INCLUSION?

### PURPOSE

USA Swimming strives to include all athletes within their swim teams. This means that all swimmers are given an opportunity to participate on the team, no matter their ability or disability.



### IMPACT

Benefits of inclusive swim teams include:

- teamwork & social skills
- self-esteem & confidence
- strengthened peer & family relationships
- direction following skills
- enhanced motor skills

### 3 WAYS TO SUPPORT INCLUSION

- 1 Say "YES!"** to including athletes who look, act, or swim differently.
- 2 Be open to learning.** You do not need to be an expert, but be willing to try new things and seek resources to help you grow.
- 3 Ask questions.** Support open dialogue on your team regarding disability.

For more information on USA Swimming and disability, please visit <https://www.usaswimming.org/home/disability> or reach out to your LSC Disability Chairperson for more resources.



## SHARPENING SKILL

### POST #2: GETTING TO KNOW THE GUARDIAN

**Focus:** Promote Communication.

**Why:** The goal of this prompt is to learn more about your swimmer from the person who knows them best, the guardian. The hope is that by creating a space for open communication, our team of coaches will be equipped with information about your athlete in order to lead them in ways that are best for their learning style.

**Directions:** Distribute this document or attach the questions within an email letter for the guardians on your team. Allow 1-2 weeks for full responses and encourage guardians to include any additional information about their athlete.

**NAME:**

### ***Getting to Know the Guardian***

1. DESCRIBE WHAT YOU HOPE YOUR CHILD WILL GAIN FROM BEING ON THE SWIM TEAM.

2. DESCRIBE THE OPTIMAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR SWIMMER.

3. DESCRIBE SOME THINGS THAT MAY CAUSE YOUR SWIMMER TO BECOME FRUSTERATED.

4. PLEASE LIST ANY THING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE THE COACHING TEAM TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR SWIMMER.

## SHARPENING SKILL

### POST #3: GETTING TO KNOW THE SWIMMER

**Focus:** Promote Communication.

**Why:** The goal of this prompt is to get to know your swimmers outside of the pool. By opening up dialogue apart from the sport, the coach is given opportunities to better connect with their athletes.

**Directions:** Include this document on your weekly team newsletter or hand out paper copies at practice. Have swimmers fill out the document and return to the coaching staff. Please allow 1-2 weeks for full responses. Use the information to regard any pertinent information about your swimmer and to better know your athletes.

**NAME:**

***Getting to Know Me***

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR THE SWIM TEAM?	WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT SWIMMING?
WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE WITH SWIMMING?	WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO OUTSIDE OF THE POOL?
I BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW THIS ABOUT ME....	

## SHARPENING SKILL

### POST #4: AWESOME ABILITY SPOTLIGHT

**Focus:** Promote Communication.

**Why:** Advocacy for swimmers with disabilities can start with your own team. By shedding light on a swimmer with special needs, the community becomes more aware and accepting of the unique abilities of its own members. The purpose of this handout is to help promote understanding for why inclusion is important and what it may look like on your team.

**Directions:** The use of this post is optional depending on the goals of your team. Include this handout in a parent newsletter to the entire team. Emphasize that this handout is intended for individuals on the team with disabilities. Completing this handout is an **OPTIONAL** opportunity for swimmers with disabilities who wish to share about their experience or to advocate for disability diversity within their team.

**NAME:**

### *Awesome Ability Spotlight*

PICTURE OF YOU:	WHY DID YOU JOIN SWIMMING?
WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT SWIMMING?	WHAT IS YOUR GOAL THIS SEASON?
WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE OTHERS TO KNOW ABOUT YOU?	

## SHARPENING SKILL

### POST #5: REPORTING AN ISSUE

**Focus:** Promote Communication.

**Why:** Communication among team members and affiliates is essential for enhancing transparency and safety within the sport of swimming. Reporting issues when they happen is important for promoting a positive environment for all USA Swimming members. Depending on the issue at hand, there is an appropriate person to contact. Issues may include concerns with bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct, parent complaints, or code of conduct violations. Regarding individuals with disabilities who may be more vulnerable targets of bullying, it is important to understand how to handle misconduct if or when it occurs. The following infographic is intended for quick-reference on current USA Swimming resources for reporting issues. For a full reference on reporting requirements please refer to the USA Swimming Rules & Regulations handbook section 306.1 (USA Swimming, 2021b).

**Directions:** Include this document in your weekly team newsletter. Inform users about the attached links and encourage all team members to discuss concerns and report them when they occur.

## REPORTING AN ISSUE

When an issue arises it is important to report to the appropriate people. The chart includes who to contact for specific issues.

### YOUR CLUB

- Peer-peer or adult-peer bullying
- Parent issues or complaints
- Team code of conduct violations
- Team minor athlete abuse violations
- [Pre-Formatted Letter of Correspondence for Team](#)

### USA SWIMMING

- Criminal charger
- Physical or emotional misconduct
- USAS Code of Conduct violations
- USAS Safe Sport violations
- [online reporting form](#)
- [email USA Swimming](#)
- [contact USA Swimming](#)

### SAFE SPORT

- Sexual Misconduct & Harassment
- Sexually inappropriate social media
- Physical or Emotional Misconduct
- Minor Abuse Policy Violations
- Call: 833-5US-SAFE
- [Online Reporting Form](#)
- [U.S. Center for Safe Sport](#)

## MANDATORY REPORTING RULE

Under federal law, all adults who are authorized to work with minors, including USA Swimming staff, are authorized to report child abuse within 24 hours.

For more information regarding when and how to report incidents please visit: <https://www.usaswimming.org/safe-sport/deal-with-a-safe-sport-concern>

## SHARPENING SKILL

### POST #6: DEAF & HARD OF HEARING

**Focus:** Disability Awareness

**Why:** It is likely that your team may already welcome or include swimmers who are deaf or have hearing impairments. There are modifications in place under USA-S that may support your athlete during competitions.

**Directions:** Distribute this resource in your coaching newsletters to inform your staff on modifications and supportive technology in place for swimmers who are deaf and/or hard of hearing.

## DEAF & HARD OF HEARING

### MODIFICATIONS

Changes for a swimmer who is deaf or hard of hearing may include:

- Strobe lights for starting blocks
- Hand signals for starting races
- Lane re-assigned to be near starting signals

### HAND SIGNALS

Used by an assistant to denote the start of races. Hand signals vary for forward and backstroke starts.



### STROBE LIGHT

An accessory attachment that flashes a light for visual awareness at the start of races. Strobe lights may be purchased [here](#).



For more information on modifications for swimmers who are deaf and hard of hearing please view the USA Swimming Rules & Regulations handbook section 105.3



## SHARPENING SKILL

### POST #7: BLIND & VISION LOSS

**Focus:** Disability Awareness.

**Why:** Your team may have the opportunity to work with athletes who are blind or experience vision loss. Modifications under Article 105 are in place to support these swimmers. It is important for your coaching staff to be aware of classification within the Paralympic realm in the case that your athlete decides to participate in the league for the blind / vision loss category.

**Directions:** Distribute this resource in your coaching newsletters to inform your staff on modifications and supportive technology for swimmers who are blind or have vision loss.

## BLIND & VISION LOSS

### MODIFICATIONS

Changes for a swimmer who is blind or has vision loss may include:

- Assistance onto / off of the blocks
- In-water starting position
- Tapper assistance for turns & finishes
- Blackout goggles for S/SB11 class

### CLASSIFICATIONS

The following Paralympic sport classes exist for swimmers with visual impairments:

- **S/SB11** - very low visual acuity and/or no light perception
- **S/SB12** - higher visual acuity than S/SB11 and/or visual field of less than 5 degrees
- **S/SB13** - the least severe vision impairment, visual field less than 20 degrees

### TAPPERS

Tappers are the person assisting in use of the tapper pole for the swimmer. Tapper poles are not generally manufactured, instead are homemade pole devices with a soft end.



paralympic.org

For more information on modifications for swimmers who are blind or visually impaired please view the USA Swimming Rules & REgulations handbook section 105.2

## SHARPENING SKILL

### POST #8: COGNITIVE DISABILITY

**Focus:** Disability Awareness.

**Why:** Your team may have swimmers with cognitive disabilities. Did you know that they can qualify for special modifications under Article 105 for support during competitions?

**Directions:** Distribute this resource in your coaching newsletters to inform your staff on modifications and supportive technology in place for swimmers who have cognitive disabilities.

## COGNITIVE DISABILITY

### WHAT IS IT?

A person with a cognitive disability has challenges with their mental functioning which may present as problems with:

- learning
- problem solving
- communicating
- social skills
- completing activities of daily living



### MODIFICATIONS

No specific modifications exist, however, these swimmers may require:

- Help on deck from an assistant (does not need USA-S membership)
- Longer time for start / end of races
- Alternative coaching strategies

### COACHING STRATEGIES

- **Repetition:** repeat concepts & skills
- **Routine:** create a daily practice routine & introduce meet routines before competition
- **Multiple Methods:** provide visual demonstrations, written directions, and/or re-wording explanations when coaching
- **Communication:** provide time for questions and check-ins



For more information on modifications for swimmers who are blind or visually impaired please view the USA Swimming Rules & Regulations handbook section 105.4

## SHARPENING SKILL

### POST #9: PHYSICAL DISABILITY

**Focus:** Disability Awareness.

**Why:** Like any disability, each physical disability looks different. Within the sport of swimming, this means that each physical disability also has its own modifications allotted under USA-S's Article 105.

**Directions:** Distribute this resource to your coaching team in your newsletters to inform staff about specific modifications allotted for each swimming stroke, starts, and turns.

## PHYSICAL DISABILITY

### OFFICIATING

If a part of the swimmer's body is absent or cannot be used due a permanent physical disability, then that part of the swimmer's body will not be judged. This rule applies to:

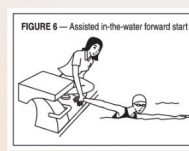
- stroke technique
- turns
- finishes

### MODIFICATIONS

- Assistance in / out of water
- Padded / slip-proof mat behind lane
- Longer time for race preparation
- 1-layer towel on blocks to prevent slip
- Disability-specific stroke modifications
- Alternative starting positions

### STARTING POSITIONS

Due to the needs of the swimmer, starting positions may be adapted by sitting, kneeling, starting on the edge of the pool, or starting in the water. Assistance for maintaining the starting position may also be provided.



For more information on modifications for swimmers who are blind or visually impaired please view the USA Swimming Rules & REgulations handbook section 105.5



# VENUE ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST

Resource for Determining Pool Venue Usability

**Why:** The purpose of this checklist is to inform swimming teams about the accessibility of the their venue as it pertains to the team members and guests who use their pool space. Following the assessment of the checklist, findings may be used to assess a need for changes or modifications within the pool venue. The information from the checklist may also be translated into the Venue Accessibility Statement which is intended to be included in meet information for swim meet competitions. It is important to note that this checklist stands as a quick reference for determining the accessibility of pool venues and does not include all standards from ADA 2010. Furthermore, the checklist is not intended to determine legal compliance of a pool venue. It is recommended that this checklist be completed each year by the swimming team, or following the event of venue renovations.

**Directions:** Some items on this checklist are not required by ADA, however, may impact your facility's usability for patrons of different abilities. Items that are denoted with superscript of 1 indicate ADA required features. Items that are denoted with a superscript of 2 indicate recommendations to increase usability for patrons with disabilities, however, they are features not required by ADA.

Venue Accessibility Checklist	
Venue Parking	
The venue has at least 1 accessible parking space for every 25 parking spaces. <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
At least 1 of the accessible parking spaces is van accessible. <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Accessible parking spaces are clearly marked <sup>1</sup> (I.e., with signage, striped paint, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Accessible parking spaces adjoin to an accessible route into the venue. <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Venue Entrance	
Is the entrance into the venue accessible? (I.e., ramped 1:20 entrance, elevator, or is located on the main level) At least one entrance does not require stairs. <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No, # of stairs: _____
Entrance route into the venue is at least 36 inches wide. <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are the venue entrance doors operable with one hand (I.e., does not require tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist) or automated? <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

If the entrance has carpet or mats, they are no higher than ½ inch. <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> There are no mats at venue
Signage denoting spaces at the venue are in text that contrasts with the background. <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Signage denoting spaces at the venue are in text that is raised to the touch. <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Signage denoting spaces at the venue are readable in braille. <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Pool and Pool Deck</b>	
Are the doors to the pool deck either operable with one hand or automated? <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the entrance to the pool accessible? <sup>1</sup> (I.e., ramped entrance, elevator, or is located on the main level)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No, # of stairs: <hr/>
Is the entrance passage route to the pool at least 36 inches wide? <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is there at least one wheelchair space (36 inches wide) in the team seating area? <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Is there a pool lift? <sup>1</sup> (Note: pool lift should be located at an area shallower than 48 inches, unless the pool is entirely deeper than 48 inches in which case the pool lift can be located anywhere.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is there a sloped entry or stairs to the pool? <sup>1</sup> (Note: reference ADA for further requirements on accessible sloped entries.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
How many entry / exit points are available within the pool?	# of pool entry/exits: _____
Where are the locations of the entry / exit points? (I.e., in lanes 8 and 1 at the starting block and turning wall end.)	Locations of entry/exits: _____ _____
What is the height from the surface of the water to the edge of the pool?	Height in inches: _____
<b>Accessible Pool Features</b>	
Is there a strobe light located where swimmers can clearly see from the starting blocks? <sup>2</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is there a tapper pole available for swimmers who are blind or visually impaired? <sup>2</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Please list any other accessible equipment that may be available at your pool:	Other: <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<b>Spectator Seating</b>	
Is access to spectator seating area accessible? <sup>1</sup> (I.e., ramped entrance, elevator, platform lift, main level access)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No, # of stairs: <hr/>
Is the passageway for spectator seating wheelchair accessible? <sup>1</sup> (I.e., at least 36 inches wide)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is there at least one wheelchair accessible spectator seat for every 25 spectator seats? <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Athlete Locker Rooms</b>	
Is there an accessible restroom for both male and female locker rooms? <sup>1</sup> (Note: according to the U.S. Center for SafeSport (2021), restrooms for athletes should be separate from restrooms for coaches, spectators, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is there at least one bench located in the locker room space? <sup>1</sup>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

<p>Is there an accessible shower available in the female and male locker rooms?<sup>2</sup> (Note: please include comments on accessible features such as shower bench or removable shower head)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Features:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Non-Athlete Restrooms</b></p>	
<p>Is there at least one accessible toilet for each sex, OR at least one unisex toilet available?<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Can the bathroom door be easily opened with one hand (I.e., does not require tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist), or is it automated?<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Is there an accessible pathway (at least 36 inches) to bathroom features (I.e., sink, hand dryer, bathroom stall)?<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>Can the sink faucet be operated without tight grasping, pinching, or twisting of the wrist<sup>1</sup>, OR is it automated?<sup>2</sup></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>

<sup>1</sup>Denotes ADA required features which can be found in full [here](#).

<sup>2</sup>Denotes recommended accommodations or features that may increase the usability of the facility for people who have disabilities. These recommendations are not required by ADA.

# VENUE ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

## A Framework for Meet Information

This section includes a framework for a Venue Accessibility Statement to be included within meet information document for hosts of swimming competitions. The Venue Accessibility Statement includes information regarding the accessibility of the venue as determined by the Venue Accessibility Checklist. The statement is intended to inform swimmers and spectators about the usability of the venue and may determine whether a swimmer or spectator can access the facility before they arrive or compete at the site. This strategy is guided by goal #9 from Table III.

**Directions:** Fill in the Venue Accessibility Statement by filling in the blank spaces and selecting the pre-formatted options in parentheses in accordance with your venue's responses to the Venue Accessibility Checklist. Please delete additional pre-formatted information that does not apply to your specific venue. Delete all remaining parentheses and blank spaces once the Venue Accessibility Statement has been completed.

Venue Accessibility Statement
<p><b>Venue Parking:</b>  The venue has _____# of accessible parking spaces and _____# of van accessible parking spaces located (on / off) site. The parking spaces (are / are not) clearly marked and (do / do not) adjoin to an accessible route into the venue.</p>
<p><b>Venue Entrance:</b>  The entrance to the venue (is / is not) accessible including (single level entry / ramped entry / elevator entry / _____ # of stairs). The entrance passageway to the venue (is / is not) wheelchair accessible (at least 36 inches wide) and includes doors that (are / are not) (operable with one hand / automated). The entrance (does / does not) have carpeting that (is / is not) higher than ½ inch. Signage denoting spaces within the venue (is / is not) available in (contrasting text / raised text / readable in braille).</p>
<p><b>Pool and Pool Deck:</b>  Entrance doors to the pool deck (are / are not) (operable with one hand / automated). The entrance to the pool deck (is / is not) wheelchair accessible including a (main level entry / ramped entry / _____ # of steps). The entrance passageway (is / is not) at least 36 inches wide. The team seating area has (_____# of) wheelchair accessible seating spaces. The pool (does / does not) have (a pool lift / sloped entry / pool stairs / # _____ of entry exit points) which are located _____. The height from the surface of the water to the edge of the pool is _____ inches.</p>
<p><b>Accessible Pool Features:</b>  The pool (does / does not) include a flasher light at the starting blocks. Other accessible pool features on site include: _____.</p>
<p><b>Spectator Seating:</b>  Access to spectator seating (is / is not) accessible including (main level access / ramped entry / elevator / platform lift / _____ # of stairs). The passageway within spectator seating (is / is not) accessible and includes _____ # of accessible spectator seats.</p>
<p><b>Athlete Locker Rooms:</b>  There is an accessible restroom for (male / female / unisex) athletes at the venue. There ( is / is not) an accessible bench located in the locker room space. Accessible amenities in the locker rooms include: _____.</p>
<p><b>Non-Athlete Restrooms</b>  There (is / is not) accessible (male / female / unisex) spectator restrooms at the venue. Restroom doors (are / are not) (accessible with one hand / automated). The passageway to amenities within the restroom (is / is not) at least 36 inches wide. Sinks in the restroom (are / are not) (accessible / automated).</p>



## References

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