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### Nashville Dolphins Volunteer Training Development

Caitlin Barnickel

*Belmont University*, [caitlinbarnickel.331@gmail.com](mailto:caitlinbarnickel.331@gmail.com)

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# Nashville Dolphins Volunteer Training Development

Caitlin Barnickel OTD/S

Belmont University - School of Occupational Therapy

Expert Mentor: Brenda Vroon, Executive Director

Faculty Mentor: Elena Espiritu, OTD, OTR/L, BCPR



## Mission

**Mission:** To improve the health and quality of life for children and adults with special needs and combat the alarmingly high statistic of drowning deaths. The Dolphins provide adaptive aquatic lessons ranging from water safety and survival through competitive swim team programming for participants at no cost. In addition, we empower our swimmers to experience the joy and pride of being a lifetime member of the Nashville Dolphins family. Our programs aim to enhance the quality, health, and safety of the daily lives of both our participants and their family members, within a safe and socially supportive community environment.

**Swimming is a lifelong sport, and we plan to be there every stroke, kick, and smile along the way.**

## Project Outcomes and Deliverables

- Collected an initial survey to gather feedback from current volunteers and identify their areas of need
- Developed volunteer manual that incorporates; sensory processing strategies, behavior management techniques, visual schedule information, communication strategies, description of specific water properties, skill development tips, and general tips for teaching children with disabilities
- Creation of star reward charts and social stories for individual swimmers
- Creation of an equipment manual to assist volunteers and staff members
- Assisted with instructing children during all learn to swim classes and provided volunteer education in the water



## Agency Needs

1. Additional volunteer training materials
2. Equipment resource guides
3. Resource guides for children with physical disabilities
4. Reward charts for use during lessons
5. Advocacy for Nashville Dolphins' swim program throughout the community

## Project Goals

- Collect information from the staff members and volunteers to identify their current needs and the areas they would like more support in.
- Research the best practices for adaptive swim.
- Research the best way to teach instructors.
- Create a resource guide to educate volunteer instructors and staff members.
- Create a swim equipment guide for volunteers and instructors.

## Acknowledgements

- I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to:
- My expert mentor, Brenda Vroon, for her guidance and support throughout this project.
  - Pam Walston, and all the Dolphins' employees for their feedback and collaboration.
  - My faculty mentor, Dr. Espiritu for her mentorship.
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