



FCA 2009
“Team Phoenix”
Parent Handbook



**1101 City Avenue
Wynnewood, PA 19096
610-658-5632**

Website: friendscentral.org/FCA

Email: fcaquatics@friendscentral.org

Welcome to Friends' Central Aquatics. Our mission is to help young athletes enjoy competitive swimming and to create an environment that encourages confidence and fosters independence. It is our hope that swimming for FCA will be a lot of fun (as well as hard work), that our swimmers will have the satisfaction of setting and achieving goals, and that the sense of responsibility attached to organized sports will extend into their lives beyond the pool. This packet explains our basic policies. Please go over it with your children.

We welcome your questions, concerns, and general feedback at any time during the season.

Team Phoenix is the development arm of the Friends' Central Aquatics' (FCA) competitive swim program. This group is for swimmers between the ages of 9 and 15 who want to participate on a competitive team but may not be ready for or interested in specializing. Swimmers should be able to swim at least 25 yards in 2 of the 4 primary strokes before joining. If you are unsure about your child's readiness for Team Phoenix, we suggest you set up a stroke evaluation by calling the FCA office at (610) 658-5632.

Team Phoenix practices at Bryn Mawr College, in the Ben Schwartz Gymnasium, three days a week (Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday) from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Attendance at practice is encouraged but there are **no practice requirements**.

FCA is a member of United States Swimming and Team Phoenix swimmers will have the opportunity to compete in local U.S.A. sanctioned meets. Participation in meets is encouraged, but optional. Swimmers will be asked to sign-up for meets in advance.

Please note: No swimmer may participate in practices until s/he has completed a registration form and submitted the appropriate fee payment. All forms can be found on the FCA website under Team Phoenix. **For more information, contact FCA at (610) 658-5632 or visit us online at friendscentral.org/FCA.**

USA SWIMMING

United States Swimming is the national governing body of competitive swimming. The country is divided into 59 Local Swimming Committees (LSCs). We participate in the Middle Atlantic Zone along with roughly 120 other teams.

TEAM PHOENIX PRACTICE TIMES

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday: 6:30 – 8:00 PM

Due to restrictions imposed by Bryn Mawr College, NO PARENTS ARE ALLOWED IN THE BUILDING. Swimmers will be met at the doors by an FCA coach starting at 6:15. The coaches will be on deck after 6:40 to conduct the practice. **LATE ARRIVALS WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GET IN.**

Parents are welcome to wait in the Bryn Mawr College Campus Center, the Student Union Building just up the hill from the pool, off of the Merion Green. There is a lounge there with coffee and comfortable chairs. When practice is over, the FCA staff will make sure that all athletes are picked up. So please respect their time, and come back to the pool building by 8:05.

ATTENDANCE

Swim team members are encouraged to practice as much as possible but Team Phoenix does not require athletes to attend practice and/or meets.

Swimmers are expected to be on time for the practices and the meets they decide to participate in. Athletes should be on deck with the appropriate equipment ready to swim at the start of the designated time. Water bottles should be filled and goggles and caps should be adjusted before practice starts. *Swimmers are expected to remain for the duration of practice.*

PLEASE NOTE: Electronics, such as cell phones, music and game devices, are **NOT ALLOWED** on deck. Please respect these rules and plan accordingly.

VACATIONS, SCHOOL BREAKS & HOLIDAYS:

If a vacation or an extended absence occurs during the swim season, please notify the team at fcaquatics@friendscentral.org or call our office at 610 658-5609 and leave a message.

SWIM MEETS

Swim meets are optional for all Team Phoenix swimmers. A sign up sheet with a deadline will be sent out at the beginning of the season. Coaches will choose a swimmer's events and send the entries in very early. We have implemented this policy because it is very competitive to get in to the Middle Atlantic swim meets. In many cases, meets are filled and subsequently closed out months in advance. Early entries help ensure that we will avoid being shut out of a meet and can publish a firm schedule and all the relative meet information on the FCA Website (friendscentral.org/FCA). **PLEASE NOTE:** swim meets are for 9-10's, 11-12's, 13-14's, and 15 & Over or Senior Age

Groups. Eligibility to compete in a particular age group is determined by the swimmer's age on the first day of the meet.

Please send all communications regarding meets to fcaquatics@friendscentral.org. Verbal communications and notes turned into coaches **will not** be accepted.

Upcoming meet information and general announcements will be posted on the FCA website, friendscentral.org/FCA, throughout the year. The Middle Atlantic website is another source for meet/session times, dates, directions, results, and other pertinent information. The address is MASWIM.ORG. We encourage all parents to visit this site as frequently as possible.

MEET TROUBLESHOOTING LIST

For some parents and swimmers this will be the first time they attend a USA meet. We have put together a trouble-shooting list to help make this process go as smoothly as possible.

PROMPTNESS: Please arrive at the meets early, at least half an hour before warm-ups start. Seating is limited and handled on a first-come first-serve basis. Kids—particularly the younger ones—will need a hand getting changed in the crowded locker rooms and out onto the deck.

ATTIRE—SWIMMERS: Please bring a swim bag to the meet. It should contain:

1. Towel and/or chamois (towels tend to get too wet too early)
2. Water bottle
3. Extra change of clothes: FCA T-shirt and a pair of sweats to wear on deck between events.
4. Sandals/flip-flops or sneakers to wear on deck.
5. Team suit(s) and cap (If you wear a cap—you must wear a team cap. It is part of the uniform and it helps the FCA coaches identify you on the crowded deck or in the water. We recommend two team caps just in case one rips.)
6. Goggles (2-3 pairs. Make sure you bring the goggles you dive with if they are different from the ones with which you train)
7. Nutritional snacks—fruits, crackers, Trail mix. You cannot count on vendors offering the food you prefer.
8. Locker lock (If you prefer to lock your belongings up)
9. List of events. Write down your events **and** event numbers on a piece of paper. Younger kids, write this information down on your hands.
10. Electronic Equipment: we encourage all athletes to leave these devices at home or have them remain in their swim bags.

ATTIRE—PARENTS: Crowded, indoor pool environments are extremely warm and humid. We highly recommend light trousers, sweats and a T-shirt for the parents.

BEHAVIOR--SWIMMERS: Enthusiasm is expected, but so is politeness and respect for meet officials, coaches, and fellow swimmers. Inappropriate behavior will **not** be tolerated.

BEHAVIOR—PARENTS: USA Swimming has very specific guidelines that parents must follow at meets. **Most importantly, no parent is allowed on deck or near the blocks, under any circumstance, and interaction with coaches must be kept to a minimum.** These rules are particularly important to remember for those meets at which there is not a clear distinction between deck and gallery space.

PARENT PARTICIPATION: Parents, please be prepared to volunteer. Teams are sometimes asked to provide backup timers or runners. Since parents otherwise are not allowed on deck, this is an excellent way to develop a better understanding of how these meets really work.

ALERTNESS: It is very important that parents know what events are going on. Your children will want to come see you in the stands or the foyer to purchase snacks or swim paraphernalia. It is very important that you do not lose sight of time. The meet will not wait, and if your child is not behind the blocks ready to race, he or she will not swim.

MEET PROGRAMS: Purchase a meet program immediately since they frequently sell out. Meet programs provide an excellent overview of the meet and serve as a guide as to when to expect your kid(s) to compete.

NUTRITION: It is very important that the kids eat and hydrate appropriately. All swimmers must have water bottles. It is virtually impossible to over hydrate especially with H₂O, but it is very possible to overeat, especially between events. All kids have different eating habits and there are a myriad of evolving nutritional footnotes, but we strongly recommend, “grazing” with nutritional food (bagels, fruit, trail mix etc.) not junk food or candy over the course of the 4-5 hour session. Plan your primary meals roughly 45 minutes to an hour before competition.

DISQUALIFICATION: All USA meets require swimmers to perform their strokes (or events) legally. Age group swimmers, high school swimmers, college, and Olympic swimmers have all been disqualified. Semantics sometimes come into play, but in general, the rules governing the legality of the strokes, the turns and the events, are straightforward and clearly stipulated in the rulebook. What is of utmost concern is the morale of the child. The majority of officials have kids who swim and are acutely aware of this. Their demeanor when explaining a disqualification to a swimmer is objective, professional and, above all, caring. FCA’s approach to this sensitive issue is to provide care and support first, advice second. And while a disqualification is sometimes tough to bear from the stands, we highly recommend that parents follow the same procedure. Above all, do not jump to your child’s defense by criticizing the official. If you have any questions at all about the specifics of a disqualification, please take up the issue with a FCA coach, not an official or a swimmer, after the session is over.

MEET ESCROW ACCOUNT: All USA meets have an entry fee. This amount is determined by the number of events the swimmer enters, (determined by the coaches), and the event fee (determined by each host team)—which usually ranges from \$3.00 to \$5.00. For instance, if Mary Stroman swims 7 events at the GCIT meet in October and the meet event fee is \$3.00, her entry fee is \$21.00. FCA pays all entry fees when we sign up for each meet at the beginning of the season. The amount is deducted from your Meet Escrow Account. If there is a remaining balance in your escrow account at the end of the season, it will be applied to any of your outstanding team balances. If there is still a remainder, you will be given a refund or the option to roll the amount into the next season's escrow account. All outstanding balances due must be paid before a swimmer may start the following season.

BEHAVIOR & DISCIPLINE

Because FCA believes that swimmers, regardless of their age, need to demonstrate respect for themselves, their teammates, and their coaches, both at practices and meets, we have a **3-STRIKE POLICY** for inappropriate behavior such as repeated **lateness, belligerence, or potentially harmful acts.**

Inappropriate behavior will result in the swimmer being dismissed from practice. After two dismissals, the coach will call a meeting with the swimmer's parents and issue a "strike one" warning. Subsequent lateness, belligerence, or disruption will result in the swimmer being issued a "strike two" warning, dismissed from practice, and required to sit out of the next meet. Finally, with "strike three" the swimmer will be suspended from the team for the remainder of the season. No refund will be offered on fees.

This behavior policy is not meant as a statement of punishment. It is intended to help make the swimming experience more enjoyable for everyone involved.

ATTIRE/MERCHANDISE

SWIM MEETS: Team suits and caps (if your hair falls below your eyes) **MUST** be worn at all meets.

PRACTICE: Training attire must be worn for practices. Girls should wear the standard competitive swimsuit. Boys must wear one of three suits: a standard training or "workout brief," a Jammer, or for the unselfconscious, a traditional "Speedo." Brands, styles, and colors run the gambit, and swimmers should purchase whatever "suits" their fancy. Although it is not required, we recommend purchasing a number of caps and another suit for practice to preserve your team uniform.

All team suits and caps can be purchased through **Heather Petrie** (610) 658-5632 or friendscentral.org/FCA. Additional team spirit wear is available through Heather at the Friends' Central pool. **No apparel will be given out without payment.**

Every effort will be made to keep all team related items in stock, but FCA is not intending to offer a complete line of swim gear. There are any number of sports stores that offer swim gear, however, it has been our experience that Toad Hollow Athletics, 810 Lancaster Avenue, Berwyn, PA (610) 640-0594 provides one of the most complete selections of swimming merchandise at competitive prices in the area. Finally, FCA awards T-Shirts to all swimmers who qualify for and swim in Championships (JOs, Zones, and Sectionals).

Water bottles are required for practice and for meets. Dehydration is the primary reason for cramps and fatigue. A swimmer loses six to eight ounces of fluid every fifteen minutes. It is very important to prehydrate, to drink during practice, and to rehydrate afterwards. We also recommend deck sandals for locker room passage and meets. Chamois towels are practical and do not take up a lot of room in swim bags or backpacks.

POOL, LOCKER ROOMS, & FACILITIES

General safety rules will be enforced strictly on deck, in the locker rooms, and throughout the facility. Most notably: Swimmers are **not allowed** in the water or on the racing blocks without permission and staff supervision.

Horseplay in the locker rooms will not be tolerated. Please remember to turn off the showers when finished and to treat both the locker rooms and the Bryn Mawr College facilities with respect. We are guests on the campus.

MISCELLANEOUS

FCA WEBSITE: (friendscentral.org/FCA). It is our goal to have all the information pertaining to our programs at your fingertips.

USA TRANSFERS: Swimmers from other USA clubs switching to FCA must have a transfer form completed before they can practice. There are no exceptions to this rule.

PARKING: Parking for Team Phoenix is in the lot adjacent to the Ward Building just off of New Gulph Road.

COMMUNICATING WITH COACHES

A traditional communication gap occurs when parents discuss their disagreements over coaching philosophy with other parents rather than talking directly to the coach. Problems are created not resolved this way. Listed below are some guidelines for how parents can raise difficult issues with a coach:

- Try to keep foremost in your mind that you and the coach have the best interests of your child at heart. If you trust that the coach's goals match yours, even though his/her approach may be different, you are more likely to enjoy good rapport and a constructive dialogue.
- Keep in mind that the coach must balance your perspective of what is best for your child with the needs of the team or a training group that can range in size from 10-50 members. On occasion, an individual child's interest may need to be subordinate to the interests of the group. In the long run the benefits of membership in the group compensate for occasional short-term inconvenience.
- If your child swims for an assistant coach, always discuss the matter first with that coach, following the same guidelines noted above. If the assistant coach cannot satisfactorily resolve your concern, then ask that the head age group coach or head coach join the dialogue as a third party.
- If another parent uses you as a sounding board for complaints about the coach's performance or policies, listen empathetically, but encourage the other parent to speak directly to the coach. He/she is the only one who can resolve the problem.

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF SWIMMING PARENTS

By Rose Snyder

1. Thou shalt not impose your ambitions on thy child.

Remember that swimming is your child's activity. Improvements and progress occur at different rates for each individual. Don't judge your child's progress based on the performance of other athletes, and don't push them based on what you think they should be doing. The nice thing about swimming is that every person can strive to do their personal best.

2. Thou shalt be supportive no matter what.

There is only one question to ask your child. "Did you have fun?" If meets and practices are not fun, your child should not be forced to participate.

3. Thou shalt not coach your child.

You have taken your child to a professional coach, do not undermine that coach by trying to coach your child on the side. Your job is to support, love, and hug your child no matter what. The coach is responsible for the technical part of the job. You should not offer advice on technique or race strategy. That is not your area. This will only serve to confuse your child and prevent a swimmer/coach bond from forming.

4. Thou shalt only have positive things to say at a swimming meet.

If you are going to show up at a swimming meet, you should cheer and applaud, but never criticize your child or the coach.

5. Thou shalt acknowledge thy child's fears.

A first swimming meet, 500 free or 200 IM can be a stressful situation. It is totally appropriate for your child to be scared. Don't yell or belittle, just assure your child that the coach would not have suggested the event if your child was not ready to compete in it.

6. Thou shalt not criticize the officials.

If you do not have the time or the desire to volunteer as an official, don't criticize those who are doing the best they can.

7. Honor thy child's coach.

The bond between coach and swimmer is a special one, and one that contributes to your child's success as well as fun. Do not criticize the coach in the presence of your child, it will only serve to hurt your child's swimming.

8. Thou shalt not jump from team to team.

The water isn't necessarily bluer at the other team's pool. Every team has its own internal problems, even teams that build champions. Children who switch from team to team are often ostracized for a long time by the teammates they leave behind. More importantly, swimmers who switch teams rarely do better than they did before they sought the bluer water.

9. Thy child shalt have goals besides winning.

Giving an honest effort regardless of the outcome, is much more important than winning. One Olympian said, “My goal was to set a world record. Well, I did that, but someone else did it too, just a little faster than I did. I achieved my goal and I lost. This does not make me a failure, in fact, I am very proud of that swim.”

10. Thou shalt not expect thy child to become an Olympian.

There are 225,000 athletes in United States Swimming. There are only 52 spots available for the Olympic Team every four years. Your child’s odds of becoming an Olympian are 1 in about 4,300. Swimming is much more than just the Olympics. Ask your coach why he coaches. Chances are, he was not an Olympian, but still got enough out of swimming that he wants to pass on his love of the sport to others. Swimming teaches self-discipline and sportsmanship; it builds self-esteem and fitness; it provides lifelong friendships and much more. Most Olympians will tell you that these intangibles far outweigh any medals they may have won. Swimming builds good people and you should be happy your child wants to participate.