



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA OFFICIALS' POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

October, 2026

Southern California Swimming is the local governing body for USA Swimming in the Southern California. SCS Officials' Policies and Procedures are intended to maintain a high level of consistency in officiating and shall provide programming and oversight of recruiting, training, certifying, educating, and mentoring.

Officials Program Overview

The Officials' Committee shall establish and publish the requirements to become an official in SCS. The minimum standards required to become an SCS official shall at least meet the minimum standards established by the USA Swimming Officials' Committee, for those positions where there are national standards. The certification criteria should be accessible to all certified officials at any time.

Individuals interested in becoming an SCS Official shall work one meet (4 sessions) as an apprentice official. An apprentice official **must register** with USA Swimming. As of June 11, 2025, an apprentice has 60 days to complete the appropriate background check, APT, Concussion, CANRA, online clinics for Foundation of Officiating and Stroke and Turn. Until USA Swimming registration is completed, a trainee is not allowed on deck.

The Officials' Committee shall maintain a roster of all currently certified officials. Officials may request not to be included in any list published on the SCS website, which may include their name, certification level, phone number, and email address. If the official makes a request to be excluded from the main list that is published, they may not get called to work meets in the SCS area, as the people doing the assignments may not know to call or email an official.

THE 5 PILLARS

1) OFFICIAL RECRUITING

The goal of the Officials Recruiting Program is to promote an inflow of new officials by engaging all existing officials and teams to participate in extending a consistent invitation to parents. It

takes a combined effort from the teams, coaches, and officials to provide parents with the opportunity to learn and give back to the sport of swimming by becoming an official.

The SCS Officials Committee is composed of the Officials Chair and the Geographic Officials Representatives from each of the six geographic committees: Coastal, Desert, Eastern, Pacific, Metro and Orange.

- a) Each Geographical Committee Representative will present at committee meetings the opportunity and need for officials.
- b) Athletes, ages 16-17, may become junior officials. The athlete representatives on the official's committee, shall provide the information to other swimmers, coaches, and parents.
- c) Information on how to become officials will be provided on the SCS website or through the Geographic Committee Representatives.

2) OFFICIALS TRAINING

The Official Training Program intends to ensure that all officials, including Junior Officials are applying the rules with equal interpretation and to provide the swimmers in the LSC with competitions that are fair and equitable to everyone involved. Ensure that the quality of officiating provided to our LSC is conducted with integrity, consistency, fairness, and held to the highest standards of professionalism.

- a) Membership in USA Swimming
 - i. All deck officials, administrative officials, and the meet director at ANY sanctioned Southern California Swimming meet shall be a current non-athlete member of USA Swimming and adhere to all requirements related to background, athlete protection, and concussion protocol training. As required by the State of California, all officials must take the CANRA course (when working in the state of California).
 - ii. When joining USA Swimming, the potential official will need to apply as either an athlete or non-athlete member. Most officials are non-athlete members. If you are a Masters swimmer or an age group swimmer training with a USA Swimming club, you would register as an athlete member for insurance purposes (YOU NEED NOT be registered twice. Members may designate both athlete and official on the registration application (Only athlete-coaches need to be registered twice).
- b) A rulebook may be obtained on the USA Swimming website.
 - USA Swimming's URL is www.usaswimming.org
 - Hover over the "about" tab and select the Rules and Regulations link
 - Locate the current rulebook link and click that link
 - Once the document is loaded to a local computer, print Article 101. That article contains the technical rules for the strokes and relays.

- c) Meet Referees should strive to ensure that they are working to use at least one official who was certified in the last 6 months, if available, to ensure new officials are not left on the sideline, but working and honoring their skills. Each Geographic Committee Representative should maintain a list of new officials in their committee.
- d) The Officials' Committee will work to send out periodic links to various videos, rule interpretations and informational material from the USA Swimming website each quarter.
- e) To begin training, an individual must reach out to the Geographic Committee Representative and/or Meet Referee to request the opportunity to train at his/her meet.
- f) At each meet, the Meet Referee is allowed to have a maximum of two (2) trainees on the deck at the same time. The host team shall be aware of which trainees are working the deck.

3) TRAINING FOR ALL POSITIONS

STROKE AND TURN JUDGE TRAINING

The primary function of all officials is to ensure “a “fair and equitable competition.” The way a Stroke & Turn Judge performs this function is to ensure that all competitors comply with the technical rules of the event in which they are competing. SCS and USA Swimming have adopted the philosophy that all competitors, regardless of age (from the age of 5 years to the national champion), must conform to the technical rules. Officials must always remember that an “ugly looking” stroke is not necessarily a disqualification and any doubt goes to the benefit of the swimmer.

SCS offers officials the opportunity to continue their training for positions such as starter, deck referee, administrative official, administrative referee, and meet referee. If a stroke and turn judge is ready to make the transition into another position, he/she shall notify the Geographic Committee Representative and/or the Meet Referee to give them an opportunity to be mentored.

USA Swimming offers 3 levels of certification: local (N1), National (N2), and National Championship (N3). Typically, two meets will be offered each year for evaluation and promotion to the National and National Championship level. Other possibilities for evaluations are OQM meets which are held several times a year, such as Sectional Meets and Futures Meets, throughout the country.

Officials are encouraged to work outside of their committee areas and their LSC to continue their education as an official in the sport of swimming.

USA Swimming provides online clinics for each position available. These clinics are mandatory. These may be taken any time and expire every three years.

4) OFFICIAL EVALUATION/CERTIFICATION

The Official Certification Program shall provide a clear and concise certification criterion so that officials understand the requirements and necessary steps to advance through each certification level. The Officials' Committee will provide certification for: Meet Referee, Deck Referees, Administrative Officials, Starters, and Stroke and Turn Judges. As part of the role of Admin official, the training involves timing operator, pre/post meet information, and meet results. The Executive Officials Committee, the Geographic Representatives, and the general officials' membership shall ensure that all new officials feel welcome and are allowed to work meets and advance as they meet the certification standards.

- a) The Officials Chair shall provide each Geographic Committee Representative a list of new officials in their committee so they can monitor certification progress and help ensure new officials are invited to work meets. New officials are encouraged to work outside of their home Geographic Committee area.
- b) The Officials Committee shall establish criteria for selecting experienced officials to serve as evaluators for specific positions. These evaluators will not only assess an official's performance but also provide mentorship, offering guidance and practical insights to strengthen a new official's understanding of rules, regulations, and procedures. Their role supports fair and equitable competition while fostering growth and confidence in developing officials.
- c) An evaluation is an opportunity for an official to receive feedback on their knowledge, skills, judgment, and performance in a specific officiating position. Participation and/or completion of an evaluation does not guarantee certification or advancement.
- d) Certification is awarded when the official has demonstrated the knowledge, experience, skills, and level of performance required for the position. The evaluator may identify areas for continued development and recommend additional training, mentoring or deck experience before certification is appropriate (use of an action plan).
- e) Evaluations shall be performed using the designated forms provide by USA Swimming and modified by SCS Officials Committee. These forms are available through the Officials Chair and the Geographic Committee Representatives. Any new official and official seeking a certification for advancement, shall provide the Meet Referee and/or mentor a copy.
- f) Evaluation forms are to be submitted to the Geographic Committee Representative for vetting purposes; then submitted to the Officials Chair for final approval. Upon final approval, the officials chair will indicate in OTS the level the official has achieved.

- g) The Officials Committee will maintain a certification criteria document that will be periodically adjusted to meet new rules and regulations or any changes to the certification process that USA Swimming passes to all LSCs for adoption. That certification document is not included in this policy statement and can be found on the website maintained by Southern California Swimming. <https://www.socalswim.org>

5) OFFICIALS EDUCATION

- a) The Officials Chair and Geographic Committee Representatives shall disseminate all educational material received from USA Swimming promptly by email or posted on the SCS Website. The Officials Committee will provide an opportunity through special meetings or online videos to further each official's skill set. The Officials Committee shall provide periodic updates to the members, either by email and/or by posting on the SCS website under the officials' section.
- b) Hold yearly meetings, either in-person or via virtual meeting, to offer the opportunity to engage the general membership and to provide a platform that will more effectively bring a common understanding on how to interpret and apply the rules.
- c) Recertification testing is required at your highest certification level held, and is required every three years. If a clinic is held, officials will be expected or highly encouraged to attend (via zoom or in person).
- d) All officials are required to take the online clinics provided by USA Swimming for Foundations of Officiating, stroke and turn, starter, referee, and administration, every three years. APT is required for all membership annually. It is the official's responsibility to keep all of their certification requirements current according to the expiration dates shown on. Your USA Swimming account.
- e) The Officials Committee has regular meetings that are held quarterly, unless extenuating circumstances occur. These meetings provide information to all the LSC officials and for the committee to vote on agenda items. If the general officials' membership wishes to bring a topic up to the committee, they should provide that information to the Geographic Officials Committee Representative for their area so they can add it to the agenda.

NATIONAL MEET TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

A travel stipend is intended to assist with an official's travel expenses to work national level competition. The Officials Committee Chairs through the Operation Vice Chair shall recommend to the Board of Directors which meets shall be eligible for reimbursement during the following competitive year (September 1 to August 31).

The meets may be recommended from amongst the following meets: USA Pro Series, USA Junior National Championships, USA National Championships and Open Water National Championships. Reimbursement for a Sectional and/or Futures meet will be taken under consideration, if the meet is held outside of SCS.

The Officials' Committee shall recommend annually to the Board of Directors the maximum amount to be paid per meet held during the following competitive year. An official may receive one reimbursement in each competitive year, (September 1 to August 31). You will be required to work 6 out of the 8 sessions (80%) in order to receive a reimbursement.

Budgeted Officials reimbursement funds shall be allocated to each meet by the Officials' Committee at the start of the fiscal year and shall be granted as long as the criteria has been met. The total budget amount allocated for reimbursement by the Executive Official's Committee for the upcoming fiscal year is requested each year and approved by the Board of Directors and then ratified by the House of Delegates as part of the LSC Budget. Once that amount in pre-meet approval is reached, and/or actual payout has been paid, no further reimbursements will be considered. The amounts shown below were developed to provide the greatest opportunity for multiple officials to receive some reimbursement, while it is known that it will not cover the entire amount for an individual to attend some travel meets.

Reimbursements are subject to the rules below, and once these funds are exhausted, no additional allocations will be provided the remainder of the competitive year. To receive travel assistance from SCS, an official must meet certain minimum eligibility requirements:

- a) Must be registered with USA Swimming and SCS for at least 12 months.
- b) Must have worked a minimum of twelve (12) months prior to the meet or four SCS sanctioned meets during that time. Approved and Observed meets are not valid.
- c) Must notify the SCS Official's Chair with the intent to apply and request a reimbursement upon acceptance to the meet and before the date of the meet. The official must provide a copy of the acceptance letter for the meet.
- d) To be eligible for reimbursement for a Level 1 or 2 meet (Sectionals/Futures), the official must be in an assigned position.
- e) An official may only be reimbursed for two meets per fiscal year and only up to the maximum amount; must work 6 out of 8 sessions (80%). This does not include time trials.
- f) The reimbursement request must be submitted no later than 30 days after the meet ends, or by August 23 of any year. This is the SCS fiscal year-end deadline.
- g) The reimbursements amount for an official to receive are:
 - Level 5: Nationals, US Open (Maximum-\$800)
 - Level 4: Pro Series (Maximum-\$800)
 - Level 3: Junior Nationals and Open Water Nationals (Maximum \$800)

- Level 1 and 2: Sectionals and Futures (**reimbursed for assigned positions only** @\$50 per day, providing the officials works all sessions, 4 days or 80% of the meet)
 - h) Any SCS Official who has been invited to work at Olympic Trials may request to be awarded the same full amount as the Athlete. A recommendation from the Officials' Committee Chairs will also be requested from the Board of Directors to ensure the official is in good standing with SCS.
 - i) Western Zone Age Group and Senior Championship meets qualify for reimbursement under the Western Zone Mentoring and Travel Assistance Program and NOT under the SCS Policy.
 - j) To request a SCS Travel Reimbursement, officials need to complete the SCS Officials' Travel Application and submit an SCS expense report, listing the expense incurred to the Officials Chair <https://www.socalswim.org>.
- i. Receipts for all expenses must be listed on the report. If driving, the standard IRS mileage rate should be used, and only mileage from the originating point to and from the meet location will be reimbursed.
 - ii. The SCS Officials Chair will certify that the official is eligible and meets all requirements and will submit the names to the SCS Finance Vice Chair within ten days after the submission deadline for reimbursement.
 - iii. The SCS Officials Chair will notify any official not meeting the requirements. That official can then submit an appeal which will be heard by the SCS Board of Directors the next meeting. The Board will vote on the appeal at that time.

ADMINISTRATION OF MEETS

Each certified official shall, when assigned, carry out his/her duties in accordance with current rules and regulations of USA Swimming and current procedures of Southern California Swimming.

- a) The meet host is responsible for obtaining the Meet Referee and Administrative Referee. The Meet Host may defer the staffing of other officials to the Meet Referee and/or the Administrative Referee respectively.
- b) Officials SHALL NOT solicit or request appointment as Meet Referee, or to any other officiating positions directly from a host team.
- c) For LSC Championship meets such as JAG, WAG, Age Group; other SCS meets such as Legends of Coaching, Grand Challenge, SCI, LAI, and SMOC the host must submit a request for a Meet Referee and Administrative Referee to the **LSC OFFICIALS' CHAIR BEFORE** contacting any officials to work these meets. This ensures that the requested officials for the meet are in good standing with USA Swimming and SCS. <https://www.socalswim.org> and /or <http://www.usaswimming.org>
- d) This request should be submitted prior to sanctioning of the meet and at least 20 days prior to the date of the meet.

e) There are applications to officiate, these must be submitted to the LSC OFFICIALS' CHAIR, along with the Meet Referee who will consider those officials for the meet.

EXPECTATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

For additional information regarding officials' expectations, check out the website www.usaswimming.org

1. Administrative Official

An SCS Administrative Official shall have all the duties and authority describe in the USA Swimming Rules and Regulations to maintain the "dry side" portion of a swim meet. The Administrative Official in conjunction with the Meet Referee shall ensure that USA Swimming and SCS policies and procedures are followed in running a sanctioned swim meet. The "dry side" officials consist of Announcer, Timing Operator, AO, and the AR who supervises seeding, results, and announcing.

- a) At the conclusion of the meet, the AO/AR shall submit a report with the disqualifications to the Official's Chair in CSV format.
- b) Create and utilize a tracking form for new officials on deck for each sessions worked to receive credit for certification. These are to be submitted by the Geographic Committee Representative to the Officials Chair.
- c) Before the meet, there shall be communication with the MR and the host meet director so the everyone is on the same page. This includes emails, information sent out to the officials, coaches, and meet director.
- d) All reports generated by the meet AO shall be kept on file for at least three years.

2. Meet Referee

The Meet Referee serves the athletes and the competition. The position should not be viewed as an entitlement or personal appointment.

Officials interested in becoming a Meet Referee or gaining experience in other positions are encouraged to communicate their developmental goals through the appropriate officials' leadership.

Above all, the Meet Referee should lead by example by being prepared, fair, consistent, calm, approachable, and committed to providing the best possible competitive environment for the athletes and officials

An SCS Meet Referee shall have all the duties and authority as described in USA Swimming Rules and Regulations.

- a) The Meet Referee (MR) must be aware of what is taking place throughout the meet and ensure all procedures are followed consistently and competition is being conducted fairly by all officials.
- b) The MR must uphold the integrity of a meet and question officials' calls, especially repetitive calls.
- c) The MR should maintain a notebook for the meet which contains the meet announcement, psych sheets, timeline, emergency information for each official on deck, deck rotations, and other paperwork generated by the Administrative Official.
- d) A MR is responsible for updating officials' sessions and positions worked at the meet in OTS within **7 days** of the competition of the meet. This includes apprentice officials who are working the meet.
- e) The MR is responsible for providing a bell for distance races and clipboards for STARTER, DECK REF, and Order of Finish Board, if necessary.
- f) The MR should act as a mentor by using at least one new official that was certified in the last 6 months for appropriate level meets.
- g) To be assigned as Meet Referee at a championship meet, an official must have a minimum of three to five years of experience in the role, including experience at a heats-and-finals meet. This position shall be considered through the Executive Officials' Committee and approved by the committee.

3. Deck Referee and Starter

Deck Referees and Starters have the authority relative to the start, stroke, turn, and finish. They have control of the swimmers from the time they are on the starting block until the athletes finish the race.

- a) **STARTER:** it's more than saying "take your marks"
 - i. The Starter should avoid holding a clipboard when starting an event. The clipboard should remain on the table until the starter sends the athletes off, watch the pool until heads up, take a step back, return the microphone to the holder or on the table. Unless asked to watch stroke, the starter should remain off deck. If the starter is watching stroke, make sure you do not take your eyes off the pool to pick up the clip board or put your microphone away).
 - ii. The starter will decide when to start the event after the DR turns the heat over to them.
 - iii. The starter should determine where he/she will stand to start, and the DR will locate themselves around the starter.
 - iv. The Starter is responsible for giving timing instructions 10 minutes prior to the meet. This can be accomplished by going down the line or in a group.
 - v. The Starter must check all equipment, the starting unit and microphone to ensure it is operational.

- vi. The starter is the one that shall initiate a possible “false start”. No discussion is to take place between the starter and the deck referee. The starter shall mark their paperwork and then hand that paperwork to the deck referee, without speaking, and let the deck referee make the decision about the false start.

b) **DECK REFEREE:** “it’s more than blowing the whistles”

- i. The DR will ask the starter where he/she would like to stand prior to the start, and the DR will work around the location of the starter.
- ii. Whenever practical, the Deck Referee should position themselves with their body and attention oriented toward the athletes, the pool and the officiating team. Positioning should allow the referee to maintain awareness of the competition and observe the officials for whom they are responsible.
- iii. After the DR indicates that the starter shall start the event, The DR shall walk to the backstroke flags to observe the pool and the officials on deck. The DR must be aware at all times.
- iv. Referees should avoid prolonged conversations or positioning that requires them to turn their back to the pool, athletes, or officiating team while an event is in progress. Conversations that require extended attention should, whenever possible, be conducted between events or away from the active competition area.
- v. The DR should vet a call, if necessary, when a disqualification is called by a stroke and turn judge.

4. Stroke and Turn Judges

Stroke and turn judges shall perform their duties as assigned by the Meet Referee, which include observing swimmers during races to ensure the technical rules of swimming are being followed. Stroke and turn judges must signal their observation of an infraction by extending an arm above their head and reporting the infraction to the Deck Referee.

- a) Radio protocol: “I have a disqualification, lane #, describe the infraction according to the rule. Speak slowly and clearly, repeat the heat and lane #.
- b) Describe exactly what you observed, but do not scrutinize the swimmer.

5. Apprentices

- a) To begin training, an individual must reach out to the Geographic Committee Representative and/or Meet Referee to request the opportunity to train at his/her meet.
- b) Shadow your mentor on deck. Be confident and know the rules of swimming.
- c) Required to work a minimum of 4 sessions, but not limited to.
- d) You and your mentor should develop an action plan for improvement.
- e) Must work outside of the Geographic Committee before being recommended for certification for all positions. It is recommended at least 2 sessions.

- f) Evaluation forms must be submitted to the Geographic Committee Representative for vetting and educating. These forms are to be forwarded to the SCS Officials' Chair for final approval.
- g) The official in training **WILL NOT RECEIVE** any compensation for the meet.
- h) The apprentice must officiate the entire meet in the position for certification. He/she may not rotate the deck.
- l) Apprentices may not work a championship meet, unless certified in a particular position.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS FOR OFFICIALS

- a) Dress professionally in the uniform suggested by the Meet Referee. All shirts must be tucked in your pants, shorts, or skorts. Wear a belt and proper foot gear.
- b) Arrive at least 45 minutes to an hour before the start of the meet in order for the MR to conduct a briefing and give instructions, to include a timers' briefing.
- c) Make sure you have the proper equipment necessary to officiate. Such as a whistle, clipboard, pen/pencil, and an FRP radio with headset.
- d) Do not discuss disqualifications on deck or in the hospitality room.
- e) Mentoring of all officials is an ongoing process.
- f) It is suggested that SCS officials wear name tags during the meet for identification purposes.
- g) All officials should be strongly **encouraged** to volunteer during the competitive year, one short course meet and one long course meet.

STAFFING MEETS

Minimum deck staffing for SCS-sanctioned meets which includes the Meet Referee.

4 or less lanes: 3 deck officials

5-6 lanes: 4 deck officials

7-8 lanes: 5 deck officials

9-10 lanes: 7 deck officials

11-12 lanes: 7 deck officials

Double ended meets: 8 officials (MR is off deck)

Dated: October, 2026