



The Lakes Mermaids
Artistic Swimming



2022 - 2023 TEAM HANDBOOK



The purpose of this handbook is to establish a framework for a safe and positive environment for our Lakes Mermaids members. All of our TLM members are expected to read this handbook in its entirety. The Lakes Mermaids currently includes an age-group competitive artistic swim program sanctioned by USA Artistic Swimming. The Lakes Mermaids aims to foster a lifelong love of artistic swimming in our athletes from the developmental stages to the international ranks of competition. Our goal is to provide a safe environment with excellent coaches, resources, and facilities for all of our athletes. We plan to improve our athletes' physical development, while simultaneously challenging them to become the best athletes and individuals they can be. The Lakes Mermaids are committed to developing excellence in all of our athletes, both in and out of the water. Through aquatic sports, we aim to help our athletes achieve their goals and learn strategies to excel in every aspect of their lives. We are teachers, and our medium is the water!

At The Lakes Mermaids, we value:

- **Teamwork:** working together to ensure that we challenge each other to be the best that we can be!
- **Loyalty:** to our team and coaches to create a positive culture!
- **Motivation:** to ourselves, and our teammates all season in and out of the pool!

The TLM staff strives to be excellent role models and teachers to all of our athletes. One of the reasons we choose to coach is because of the positive influence that our sport and coaching mentors had on each of us. We believe that we are instilling in our athletes the discipline and work ethic necessary to be successful within their lives. Each of our coaches have their own distinct coaching styles and methods, but we are united in our beliefs. We believe, first and foremost, that it is important that our athletes be provided with a safe, positive and supportive training environment. We believe that the foundation of artistic swimming begins with proper technique and fundamentals. While our athletes receive plenty of volume while training, our coaches' primary focus is to maintain proper technique in practices and competitions. As our athletes advance through our program, coaches will continue to build on a strong foundation of proper technique. Our coaches are passionate about ensuring proper technique even as athletes receive additional conditioning – strength, flexibility, body awareness, intensity and mental preparation – in our upper levels of training. Artistic swimming is both an individual and a team sport. Your contribution individually directly impacts the team. It is our hope that through our focus on each individual by giving our athletes individual encouragement, responsibility, goals and the direction by which to achieve their goals, that they will be individuals who compete not only for themselves, *but in support of their team.*

To participate in The Lakes Mermaids, each athlete will be registered with USA Artistic Swimming.

SAFESPORT

The Lakes Mermaids strives to maintain a stable, well-trained, and experienced coaching staff at all levels of the program. Our team is committed to providing the best experience possible for minors. TLM staff members are expected to hold themselves to the highest standards of conduct when interacting with minors. Please be aware that our staff members are required to report any instances of known or suspected child abuse or neglect of minors. USA Artistic Swimming's top priority continues to be creating healthy and positive environments free from abuse for all its members. As part of its commitment to safeguard athletes, USA Artistic Swimming has released an updated Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP) applicable to all USA Artistic members, These required updates come from the U.S. Center for SafeSport (the "Center").

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Our team is committed to equal opportunity and eliminating discrimination. This commitment is both a moral imperative consistent with an intellectual community that celebrates individual differences and diversity, as well as a matter of law. The Lakes Mermaids reserves the right to suspend or expel an individual or family from our team and/or our facilities for any governing body code of conduct violation, TLM code of conduct violation or the like. Our team reserves the right to suspend or revoke facility access for similar infractions. Should you witness or become aware of a non-discrimination or code of conduct violation, the incident should be immediately reported to your Head Coach.

CONCUSSION PROTOCOL

The Ohio Department of Health has guidelines in place to educate families on the signs and symptoms of concussions and the dangers of returning to sport too soon after a head injury. Information may be found by visiting the Youth Concussions page of the Ohio Department of Health website. In compliance with Ohio's Return-to-Play Law, an athlete cannot return to play, practice or training on the same day that a player is removed due. Under Ohio law (ORC 33313.539 and ORC 3707.511), a physician must provide WRITTEN clearance for an athlete to return or play. Additional details may be found through Ohio Department of Health's document "Ohio's Return-to-play Law."

LINDSAY'S LAW

Lindsay's Law, Ohio Revised Code 3313.5310, 3707.58 and 3707.59 went into effect in 2017. This law is intended to inform and educate students and youth athletes participating in or desiring to participate in an athlete activity, their parents, and their coaches about the nature and warning signs of Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) in youth athletes. It covers all athletes 19 years or younger who practice for or compete in athletic activities organized by a school or youth sports association. Per the requirements established by Lindsay's Law, participation with our program requires youth athletes, parents/guardians and coaches to:

1. Watch a video
2. Read the SCA Informational Handout
3. Complete and return the Parent/Athlete Signature Form

These items may be found by visiting the Ohio Department of Health website. As with our concussion policy, we require any athlete who has experienced a SCA related event to provide our coaching staff with a physician's note permitting them to return to physical activities prior to returning to practice.

BEHAVIOR

We prefer that parents park and walk their children into the facility and maintain supervision of their child until practice or competition begins and that they resume supervision of their child immediately upon the completion of practice or competition. We recognize, however, that this practice is not always practical for families; therefore, some families choose to drop off or pick up their children in the parking lot. Each family should determine what is most appropriate for their child. Parents who choose to drop off or pick up their children, rather than walking them into and out of the facility, must ensure that their child is able to handle the responsibility of being temporarily unsupervised by adults (i.e. proper conduct, making good choices, understanding of facility safety, etc.). Children who demonstrate the inability to handle this responsibility will be required to be escorted by a parent or guardian before and after practices while in the facility. Parking is available at our facilities to all of our members. If we know of scheduling conflicts, we will do our best to provide you with additional parking options in nearby lots. Care, custody and control of athletes by coaching staff occurs from the scheduled start of practice to the scheduled end of practice. Parents and guardians are responsible for their children's care before and after practice. While facility staff maintain loose supervision of unrestricted public areas and pool safety supervision of athletes on deck, they do not serve in a capacity of care, custody and control. When a staff member recognizes an unsafe or a correctable behavior, they will bring it to the individual's attention and expect appropriate modification of behavior.

If discipline is necessary, the following actions will take place in this order:

1. Discussion with coach and athlete
2. Discussion with coach and athlete, and time out of practice.
3. Discussion with coach and athlete, time out of practice, and phone call home.
4. Discussion with coach and athlete, time out of practice, phone call home for removal of practice. At this time a parent conference will be requested.

If a swimmer has a serious behavior incident, the protocol will immediately move to Step 4.

ATTENDANCE

Coaches record practice attendance. Attendance in each of our training groups is necessary for teams to learn and practice routines. Changes in practice schedule may occur due to other athletic events, aquatic events and other school events. These “dates of exception” are communicated by the coaches through email notifications, app notifications and group texts. If you are uncertain about whether or not practice will be held, please reach out to a coach. If you are going to miss a practice please notify a coach in advance within a reasonable amount of time. Multiple missed practices without the coach’s knowledge may result in the removal of a routine. Swimmers are required to be at practices 2 week before a major competition. The Head Coach must be informed for any vacations or missed practices in large amounts. Team routine practices are the priority. If a swimmer misses team practices that are unexcused, then small routine practice time may be forfeited.

WEATHER

In case of inclement weather, families should assume that the TLM will hold practice unless school has been canceled, or the Franklin County Sheriff’s Office or Delaware County Sheriff’s Office has declared a Level 2 Snow Emergency. Families will receive notice regarding this closing by email and the team app. Each family needs to weigh weather conditions and other safety factors when deciding to attend practice.

EMERGENCY

If an emergency arises while an athlete is in our care, our staff will guide that athlete to an area of safety. In case of a tornado warning, fire, or other weather-related emergency during practice, all building occupants, including parents in the spectator areas, athletes and coaches on deck will evacuate according to the natatorium’s or facility’s evacuation procedures. Fire and other evacuation locations may vary depending on the situation. Staff are equipped with resources to be prepared in a number of emergency situations.

PRACTICE ARRIVAL

Athletes are permitted in the facility no earlier than 15 minutes prior to the start of scheduled practice and may enter the actual natatorium no earlier than 15 minutes prior to the start of practice unless prior authorization is given by coaches or administrators. No one is to enter the water, sit on starting blocks or diving boards, or utilize any training equipment until the coaches are present, have given permission and are in direct supervision of the activity. If an athlete chooses to not follow the above rules, a meeting will be requested with the family and disciplinary action may be taken.

FACILITIES

Only athletes should be using locker rooms during practice timeframes. Athletes who choose to change clothes in these areas should do so only in bathroom stalls and not in open areas.

USE OF CELL PHONES AND OTHER MOBILE RECORDING DEVICES

Cell phones and other mobile devices with recording capabilities, including voice recording, still cameras and video cameras increase the risk for different forms of misconduct in locker rooms and changing areas. The US Center for Safesport prohibits the use of such devices in the locker room or other changing area: Use of audio or visual recording devices, including a cell phone camera, is not allowed in changing areas, rest rooms or locker rooms. As a general rule of thumb, phones should be put away before entering changing areas, rest rooms and locker rooms. Cell phones should be put away at the beginning of practice and not be accessed during practice time, unless there is an emergency. If an athlete chooses to not follow the rules for cell phone use during practice, a meeting will be requested with the family and disciplinary action may be taken. The Lakes Mermaids also expects all athletes to demonstrate positive, ethical behavior with teammates with cell phone use. If a teammate is not following this guideline, a meeting will be requested with the family and disciplinary action may be taken.

The following links are helpful to reference and explore:

USA Artistic Swimming: <https://www.teamusa.org/USA-Artistic-Swimming>

U.S. Center for SafeSport: <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/>