



2026-2027

Friends' Central

Aquatics Member

Handbook

Vision Statement

A welcoming community where athletes are driven to achieve their full potential through dedication and teamwork

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
Vision, Values, & Behavior.....	3
Welcome Letter from the Head Coach.....	4
Team History.....	5
USA & Middle Atlantic Swimming.....	6
Leadership Structure.....	7
Coaching Staff.....	8
Coach Rights & Responsibilities.....	9
Athlete Rights & Code of Conduct.....	11
Parent/Guardian Partnership & Expectations.....	14
Competitive Groups & Progression.....	17
Mini Group.....	18
Novice Group.....	18
Junior I Group.....	20
Junior II Group.....	21
Senior I Group.....	22
Senior II Group.....	23
Senior Attendance During High School Season.....	24
Swim Meets.....	25
Private Lessons.....	26
Team Uniform & Equipment.....	27
Volunteer Program & Requirements.....	28
Officiating.....	29
Financial.....	30
Communication Policy.....	31
Meeting Schedule.....	33

Vision, Values, & Behavior

Our team culture is very important to us, and focusing on this ensures great outcomes for everyone. Below you will find our Vision and our direction as an organization. Our Vision is our guidepost for decisions and how we operate as an organization. Living up to our Values and Behaviors ensures we are at our best and contribute positively to the team. These are for everyone involved with FCA: staff, volunteers, parents/guardians, and athletes. All of us together create an atmosphere that is uplifting, exciting, and most of all cohesive.

Vision Statement

A welcoming community where athletes are driven to achieve their full potential through dedication and teamwork.

Values and Behaviors

Connection

Communicate clearly and effectively
Seek out opportunities
Embrace everyone

Integrity

Respect yourself and others
Own your actions
Wear it with pride

Consistency

Show up and participate
Build confidence through preparation
Align your commitments with your goals

Passion

Find the joy
Build dreams and work toward them
Embrace the challenge

Support

Cheer for everyone
Be dependable
Hold each other accountable

Welcome Letter from the Head Coach

FCA is much more than a place you drop your kids off for swim practice. It is a valuable experience for athletes to meet new friends, overcome adversity, and learn life lessons through achievements they thought were impossible! It is a place that fosters growth, confidence, and self-acceptance. FCA is a place that helps young people develop into young adults equipped with the life skills they need to succeed after they leave our program.

As a staff, we strive to provide a positive, competitive environment that is both challenging and fun. Our competitive year-round program is designed from Minis to Seniors to lay a foundation of technique, conditioning, and intensity that grows gradually over time. The practices we plan develop well-rounded athletes, with both their long-term and short-term goals in mind. When it comes to training, we strongly believe in quality over quantity. We are past the days of pounding yardage and have evolved a more efficient program that avoids “burnout” while still achieving the same, if not better, results. This is not to say we don’t work hard at FCA, we do! But the hard work is age-appropriate and is always mixed with fun, skill, technique, and strategy work, which engages the mind and the body. FCA is a place where we value long-term success over short-term achievement.

Sincerely,

Coach Jack

Team History

Founded in 2000, Friends' Central Aquatics (FCA) began as a humble initiative with a bold vision: to create a highly competitive, community-centered club that would develop athletes and foster a lifelong love for the sport. The program began with a high school team and grew to include a USA Swimming club team in 2001, the program's immediate success allowing for rapid expansion. The weekend swim school began in 2004, soon followed by a Master's team and Team Phoenix, a recreational program for developing athletes.

The team's original mission laid a strong foundation for the thriving program that exists today. Over the past 20 years, athletes have represented FCA at every USA Swimming championship level from 10 and Under Champs to Olympic Trials. The program has produced over 45 collegiate athletes and helped hundreds more achieve their full potential through dedication and teamwork. FCA has maintained a long-standing presence in the local community, raising over \$40,000 for charities such as Alex's Lemonade Stand, ChadTough Defeat DIPG, National Drowning Prevention Alliance, and, most recently, the USA Swimming Foundation.

Today, Friends' Central Aquatics continues to foster both a competitive spirit and a love of swimming. The program provides athletes the opportunity to hone their talent, build lasting relationships, and learn important life skills both in and out of the water in a supportive and encouraging environment.

USA & Middle Atlantic Swimming

USA Swimming is the governing body for the sport of competitive swimming in the United States. In this capacity, USA Swimming is responsible for the conduct and administration of swimming in the US. USA Swimming determines rules, implements policies and procedures, and conducts National Championship meets, disseminates information about safety and sports medicine, and selects athletes to represent the United States in international competitions.

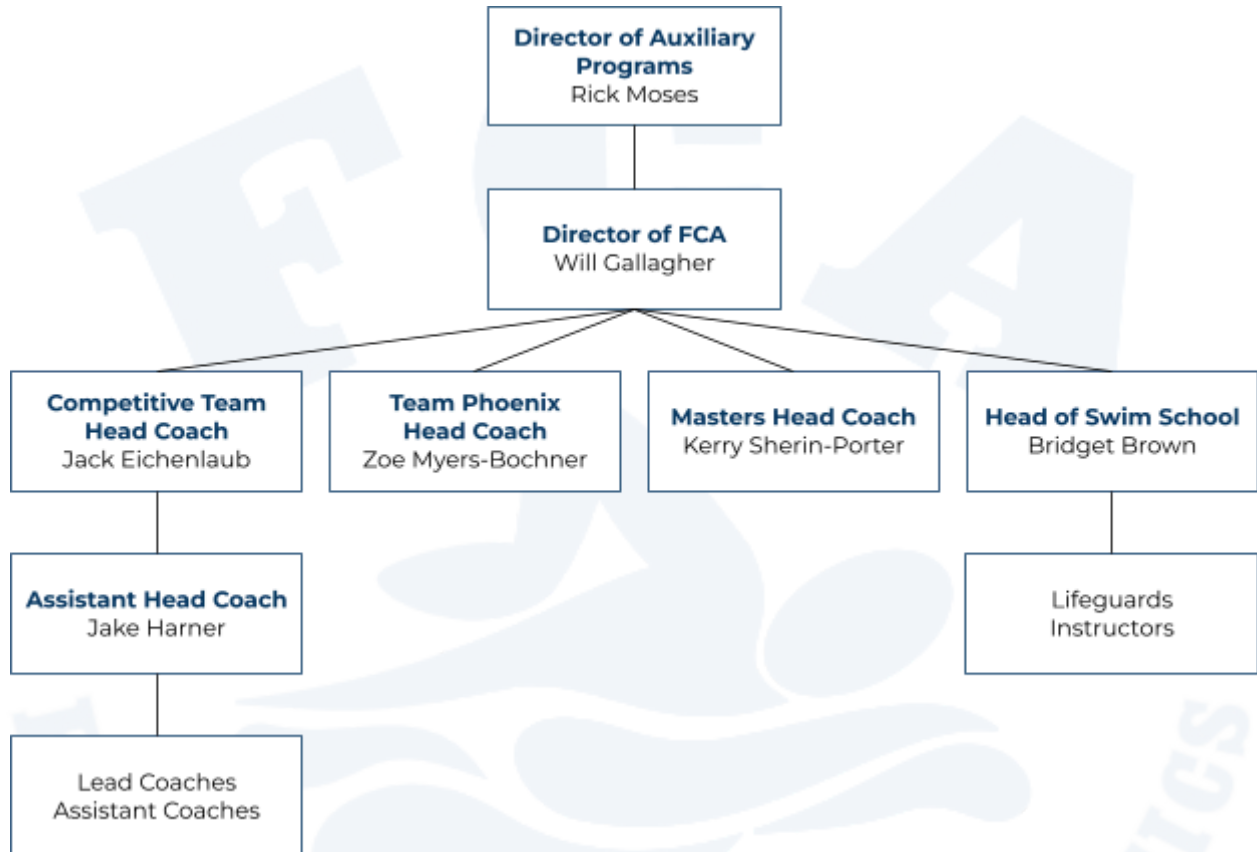
USA Swimming has divided the country into 59 Local Swimming Communities (LSC's). Each LSC is responsible for administering USA Swimming activities in a defined geographical area and operates under its own bylaws. The business affairs of each LSC are managed by a House of Delegates that includes representation from athletes, coaches, members of the Board of Directors, and participating swim clubs. Each LSC is grouped into one of four zones: Western, Central, Eastern, and Southern.

Friends' Central Aquatics is part of Middle Atlantic Swimming (MASI) LSC. MASI extends from Eastern Pennsylvania, South Jersey, and all of Delaware. MASI requires athletes to pay a membership fee in order to compete in sanctioned meets. The membership is valid for one year.

MASI is part of the Eastern Zone, which includes the following other LSC's: Adirondack, Niagara, Allegheny Mountain, Metropolitan, Maine, New England, Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, Potomac Valley, Connecticut, and Middle Atlantic.

Leadership Structure

Friends' Central Aquatics is a 501(c)3 non-profit under the umbrella of Friends' Central School. Please see below the structure of FCA.



FCA is an extension of Friends' Central School. If there is uncertainty about a particular policy or procedure in the FCA Member Handbook, the [Friends' Central School Students and Family Handbook](#) will serve as the deciding document.

Coaching Staff

You can view our coaching bios on the FCA website (swimfca.org).

In the meantime, please see the lead coaches below.

Minis

Kerry Sherin-Porter

Novice

Alex Reed & Miranda Smith

Junior I

Bridget Brown

Junior II

Jake Harner & Miranda Smith

Senior I

Jack Eichenlaub & Jake Harner

Senior II

Jack Eichenlaub & Jake Harner

Coaches' Rights & Responsibilities

Swimming is one of the few youth sports where the coaches are professionals rather than parent/guardian volunteers. They are required to hold several certifications, complete continuous training, and have experience levels that rival those of non-sport professions. In the sport of swimming, we are fortunate that coaches choose this path as a profession and have the credentials and experience to back it up. The coaching staff is consistently updating and improving our program. Currently, we have four full-time staff members and 15 part-time coaches. It is the athletes' and parents'/guardians' responsibility to make the most of the opportunities this program provides to succeed in and out of the pool.

Coaches have the right to:

1. Be treated with respect by all athletes, parents/guardians, officials, and staff.
2. Expect the full support of all parents/guardians.
3. Establish safe training programs that meet the needs and goals of athletes, the head coach, and the program.

As an FCA Coach, I agree to:

Foster a Positive Team Environment

- Create a safe, inclusive, and competitive environment where every athlete can learn and grow
- Place athletes in practice groups based on age, ability, and developmental needs
- Promote teamwork, accountability, respect, and good sportsmanship

Develop Athletes

- Prioritize the safety and well-being of every athlete
- Serve as a positive role model through professionalism, integrity, and leadership.
- Provide technically sound instruction and training based on established coaching principles and practice group goals
- Help athletes set realistic goals and develop the skills, confidence, and work ethic needed to achieve them

Lead Competition

- Determine meet entries, event selections, and relay lineups in the best interest of the athlete and team
- Plan and supervise meet warm-ups and team activities
- Provide constructive feedback, celebrate progress, and encourage continuous improvement

Communicate with Integrity

- Communicate openly and respectfully with athletes and families
- Uphold all FCA policies and the standards of USA Swimming Safe Sport and MAAPP
- Make decisions that prioritize the long-term development, health, and success of every athlete

Coaching extends beyond teaching strokes and writing workouts. FCA coaches are committed to developing confident, resilient, and respectful young people while fostering a culture of excellence, accountability, and teamwork. Together, coaches and athletes create an environment where everyone has the opportunity to learn, improve, and succeed.



Athlete's Rights & Code of Conduct

At FCA, every athlete is expected to contribute to a culture of excellence, respect, accountability, and teamwork. By meeting these standards, we create a positive, safe, and competitive environment where all athletes can learn, grow, and succeed.

This Athlete Code of Conduct outlines the general expectations for FCA athletes and is not intended to be an exhaustive list. The coaching staff reserves the right to address any behavior that is disruptive, unsafe, disrespectful, or inconsistent with FCA values. All decisions regarding team rules, expectations, and disciplinary action are at the discretion of the FCA coaching staff.

Athletes have the right to:

- Be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness by coaches, teammates, officials, volunteers, and parents
- Train and compete in a safe, positive, and inclusive environment free from verbal, physical, or emotional abuse
- Participate in practices and activities that prioritize athlete health and well-being, including reasonable accommodations when a coach is made aware of a limiting physical condition
- Know that their coaches value them as individuals, not just as athletes
- Experience practices that are challenging, purposeful, and developmentally appropriate, and competitions that foster growth and achievement
- Work with their coaches to set meaningful goals, create a plan for success, and adjust those goals as they develop
- Receive constructive feedback, encouragement, and recognition for their effort, progress, and accomplishments

As a FCA athlete, I agree to:

Support my Team

- Treat teammates, coaches, officials, volunteers, parents, and competitors with respect
- Be a positive role model through my attitude, effort, and sportsmanship
- Encourage and support my teammates at practice and competitions
- Contribute to a team culture that values accountability, inclusion, and success
- Communicate openly and respectfully with my coaches and teammates

Practice with Purpose

- Commit to training to the best of my ability and give my full effort every day
- Follow all instructions and expectations set by the coaching staff
- Arrive on time and prepared for practices, meetings, and competitions, or communicate any absences or tardiness in advance
- Leave practice early only with coach approval and written parent/guardian permission

Respect Team & Facility Rules

- Respect all rules of Friends' Central School and any facility where FCA trains or competes
- Take care of team equipment and help keep the pool deck and team areas clean
- Refrain from the use or possession of alcohol, tobacco, nicotine products, illegal drugs, or banned performance-enhancing substances. Athletes who participate in or knowingly remain present during these activities are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the team.
- Use appropriate language and demonstrate honesty, integrity, and respect. Bullying, harassment, lying, stealing, vandalism, or other behavior that reflects poorly on FCA will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the team.

Being an FCA athlete means more than competing in the pool. It means showing up with effort, supporting your teammates, embracing challenges, and representing the team with pride and integrity. Every practice, meet, and interaction is an opportunity to grow as both an athlete and a person.

Travel Related Expectations

Whether traveling with FCA or as part of an individual family, every athlete is expected to represent the team with integrity, respect, and good sportsmanship. Athletes are ambassadors for FCA both in and out of the pool.

The FCA coaching staff has final authority regarding all team travel rules, expectations, and disciplinary decisions.

Athletes are expected to:

- Follow all directions and schedules established by the coaching staff
- Adhere to all curfews and remain in their assigned rooms unless permission is granted by a coach
- Never enter or remain in a room occupied by athletes of a different gender unless a coach or approved chaperone is present. This applies to FCA athletes and members of other teams.
- Respect the hotel, competition venue, and all public spaces by maintaining appropriate behavior and noise levels
- Treat hotel property with care. Athletes assigned to a room are financially responsible for any damage or theft and may be subject to additional disciplinary action.

All team travel will be conducted in accordance with the [Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies \(MAAPP\)](#). Additional travel waivers or forms may be required and will be communicated by the coaching staff as needed

Parent/Guardian Partnership & Expectations

A positive swim team experience is built on strong communication, mutual respect, and collaboration between coaches, athletes, and families. Parents and guardians play an important role in supporting both their athletes and the team's overall culture. Our goal is to create an environment where athletes can grow in confidence, character, sportsmanship, and athletic development while enjoying the sport and feeling supported by the adults around them.

As a FCA parent/guardian, I agree to:

Support My Athlete

- Encourage effort, growth, sportsmanship, and enjoyment of the sport
- Support my athlete regardless of performance outcomes at practice or meets
- Recognize that athlete development looks different for every athlete and that progress is rarely linear
- Help my child arrive prepared, on time, and ready to participate positively in practices and meets
- Promote healthy habits, positive attitudes, and balanced expectations around competition

Respect the Coaching Staff

- Allow coaches to manage training, technique instruction, meet strategy, and athlete development
- Refrain from coaching athletes from the stands during practices or competitions
- Trust that coaches are making decisions with the best interests of both the athlete and the team in mind
- Address questions or concerns respectfully and at an appropriate time outside of practice or competition

Communicate Appropriately

- Follow the communication pathway of Lead Coach → Head Coach → Director of FCA when addressing concerns
- Maintain respectful communication with coaches, officials, volunteers, athletes, and other parents/guardians at all team functions
- Understand that disagreements may occur and commit to handling them constructively and professionally

Follow Practice & Facility Guidelines

- Respect that the pool deck is reserved for coaches and athletes during practice, and avoid interrupting with unnecessary communication except in the case of an emergency
- Communicate with coaches by email at least 2 hours prior to practice when requesting time to speak
- Take responsibility for my athlete's behavior before and after practices, including during arrival, departure, and carpools
- Ensure that only athletes registered with USA Swimming through FCA are in the water or on the pool deck at any time
- Observe practices from designated spectator areas and understand that parents/guardians, siblings, and non-registered individuals are not permitted on the pool deck
- Supervise siblings and guests at all times and ensure they remain in designated viewing areas
- Recognize that FCA families are guests of the facility and commit to following all rules set forth by Friends' Central School

Support the Team Environment

- Demonstrate good sportsmanship and model respectful behavior for all athletes.
- Respect the integrity and decisions of meet officials and event staff.
- Support the team through positive encouragement, volunteerism, and participation in team activities when possible.
- Help foster an inclusive environment free from hateful, discriminatory, or abusive language or behavior.

Swimming teaches resilience, discipline, teamwork, and perseverance. Together, coaches and families can help create a positive experience where every athlete feels supported, challenged, and encouraged to reach their potential both in and out of the pool.

Additional policies regarding volunteer requirements and financial obligations are outlined in their respective sections of this handbook and should be reviewed by all FCA families.



Competitive Groups & Progression

Introduction to Practice Groups

We strive to place athletes in the practice group that best meets their needs. Practice Group placement is based on several factors, including age, maturity, practice behavior, performance, and team dynamics. Our goal is for each Practice Group to be a cohesive unit that works well together and provides the appropriate level of challenge for the athletes.

Athlete move-ups are at the coaching staff's discretion and are based on several factors, including age, maturity, practice behavior, performance, and team dynamics. Move-ups are communicated via email by the coaching staff at the appropriate time.

Our Practice Groups Are As Follows:

- Minis (ages 6-8)
- Novice (ages 7-9)
- Junior I (ages 9-11)
- Junior II (ages 10-13)
- Senior I (ages 13-16)
- Senior II (ages 15-18)

Mini Group

The Mini group serves as a bridge between swim school and the competitive team. This is an athlete's first true experience with competitive swimming. This group fosters a fun environment while developing a passion for swimming. Emphasis will be on making swimming fun while working on developing basic stroke fundamentals through drills. Freestyle and backstroke are the primary focus before introducing breaststroke and butterfly.

The Mini athlete must be able to complete 25 yards of freestyle and backstroke without stopping. They must be comfortable with swimming with their face in the water and demonstrate the ability to breathe to the side on freestyle. The athlete should be able to demonstrate a steady flutter kick with little knee bend and toes pointed.

Attendance Standard

- At least two practices a week (two to three practices offered a week)
- All FCA hosted 10u Development Meets and/or Mini Meets (based on age)

Maturity & Expectations

- 6-8 years old
- Independent locker room use
- Transition onto the pool deck and follow the Coach's direction independently

Novice Move Up Standards

- Swim 50 yards of freestyle and backstroke
- Demonstrate correct flutter kick
- Ability to breathe bilaterally when swimming freestyle
- Proper practice behavior
 - (e.g., circle swimming, reading the clock, proper care of equipment)

Novice Group

The Novice group further develops athletes' skills in all four strokes while refining race techniques and strategies, such as diving and turns. Practice intensity increases while still being age-appropriate to build endurance. Drill progressions in each practice continue to build a solid foundation that will be built upon as athletes develop. A heavy emphasis is placed on building team relationships. Novice athletes are encouraged to challenge themselves, support one another, and grow confident in and out of the water.

The Novice athletes must be able to swim 50 yards of freestyle and backstroke without stopping. Athletes should be able to demonstrate a correct flutter kick for free and back, and bilateral breathing when swimming freestyle. Some knowledge of breaststroke and butterfly is required.

Attendance Standard

- At least two practices a week (three to four practices offered a week)
- All FCA Development Meets and/or Mini Meets (based on age)
- Encouraged to attend at least one away meet

Maturity & Expectations

- 7-9 years old
- Independent locker room use
- Transition onto the pool deck and follow the coach's direction independently
- Ability to understand written and verbal directions
- Understand (or able to quickly learn) expected practice behaviors and standards (e.g., circle swimming, reading the clock, proper care of equipment)

Junior I Move Up Standards

- Legal in all four strokes (requirement of a time in the 100 IM or 50 of each stroke in a USA Swimming Meet)
- Ability to dive off the block consistently
- Ability to perform flip turns consistently
- Proven consistent maturity and appropriate practice behavior

Junior I Group

Junior I athletes are increasingly committing to year-round swimming while balancing other activities and passions. We expect Junior I athletes to learn to set goals, be self-motivated, attend practice, and strive for improvement.

Junior I's train and compete in all four competitive strokes and compete at meets farther away (more than one hour). There is a continued focus on stroke development through drills, with increased practice duration and intensity. Dryland sessions are longer and more strength-based.

Athletes should expect to train and compete in the 10 and under IMR (100Fr, 50Bk, 50Br, 50Fl, 100IM) and IMX (200Fr, 100Bk, 100Br, *100Fly, *200IM) events.

Attendance Standard

- At least three practices a week (four practices offered a week)
- All Developmental Meets, as well as all A/BB/C meets and away meets, as determined by Coaches. (approx one to two meets per month)

Maturity & Expectations

- 9-11 years old
- Understand the logistics of a swim meet and can independently report to events
- Demonstrate respect for themselves, teammates, coaches, officials, and volunteers at practices and meets
- Read the pace clock and follow the sets written on the whiteboard
- Accept coaching feedback with a positive attitude and willingness to improve
- Develop greater awareness in the water while building the fundamentals of training and race preparation

Junior II Move Up Standards

- Six 10u Champs cuts
- Legal 10u IMR events, progressing towards 11-12 Silver Champ cuts
- Proven consistent maturity and appropriate practice behavior
- Proven and consistent ability to withstand challenging interval training

Junior II Group

Junior II athletes are on the path to "self motivation" in swimming and further wish to develop their passion for the sport. They have chosen to make a larger commitment to year-round competitive swimming, prioritizing it while leaving room to pursue other interests. Junior II athletes have met some performance standards and are working toward achieving additional age-appropriate time standards. Dryland sessions focus on strength-based training and development.

The Junior II practice group develops versatile athletes who train and compete in all 4 competitive strokes and should expect to train and compete in the 11-12 IMX events (500Fr, 100Bk, 100Br, 100FI, 200IM).

Attendance Standards

- At least four practices per week (five practices offered a week)
- All coach-recommended meets (one to two per month)

Maturity & Expectations

- 10-13 years old
- Demonstrate self-motivation and take ownership of personal goals and development
- Navigate swim meets independently and report to events on time
- Consistently show respect for themselves, teammates, coaches, officials, and volunteers
- Read the pace clock and confidently follow sets written on the whiteboard
- Accept coaching feedback with maturity and apply corrections in practice and competition
- Embrace opportunities to lead by example and positively contribute to the team culture

Senior I Move Up Standards

- Must be 13 years old
- 5x 11-12 MA Silver Champs Cuts
- Proven accountability of effort and attitude during practice and meets
- Proven commitment to improvement and willingness to be challenged

Senior I Group

Senior I athletes are middle and high school students who have committed to swimming competitively year-round. They should expect to prioritize swimming over other activities the majority of the time. The Senior I group includes athletes who have not yet made the concerted commitment of Senior II and younger athletes who have not yet reached their peak performance. Travel experience is expected, and athletes should plan to prepare for the highest-level meet they qualify for.

Senior I athletes serve as role models for our younger groups. They are setting good examples of how to behave on the team, how to treat teammates and coaches, and demonstrating proper stroke technique. They should motivate and inspire each other and their younger teammates.

Senior I athletes have mastered all four competitive strokes and are aiming to reach peak performance and achieve their goals. They should expect to train and compete in the 13 and over IMR (200Fr, 100 Bk, 100Br, 100Fly, 200IM) and IMX (500Fr, 200Bk, 200Br, 200Fly, 400IM) events. Additionally, training incorporates strength-based dryland work and yoga, as well as an introduction to resistance training and equipment such as weights, dumbbells, and barbells.

Attendance Standards

- At least five practices a week (six practices offered a week)
- All the meets the athlete has qualified for

Maturity & Expectations

- 13-18 years old
- Goal-oriented and motivated to improve
- Demonstrate taking full responsibility for training habits, effort, and attitude
- Ability to set goals and actively working towards them
- Demonstrate resilience through challenges, setbacks, and plateaus

Senior II Move Up Standards

- At least 14 years old or a high school freshman
- MA Senior Champs Cut or Finaling at MA Junior Champs
- 6x 13-14 Silver Championship Cuts
- 80% practice attendance or higher
- Committed to increasing training to 15+ hours per week at a rigorous level
- Proven commitment to attending meets
- Proven ability to effectively communicate with coaching staff

Senior II Group

Senior II is the highest level of training and competition offered at FCA. Athletes in this group have demonstrated the commitment, work ethic, and performance standards necessary to thrive in a demanding training environment, both in the water and in the weight room.

Senior II athletes are expected to lead by example, setting the standard for effort, accountability, sportsmanship, and team culture. They serve as mentors and role models for younger athletes while embracing the responsibility that comes with representing FCA at the highest level.

Training emphasizes excellence across all four competitive strokes, with continued focus on the 13 and over IMR (200Fr, 100 Bk, 100Br, 100Fly, 200IM) and IMX (500Fr, 200Bk, 200Br, 200Fly, 400IM) events. Dryland and strength training progress beyond Senior I, incorporating advanced weight room work designed to develop power, durability, and long-term athletic performance.

Many Senior II athletes aspire to compete at the collegiate level. FCA coaches are committed to supporting families throughout the recruiting process, including goal-setting, communication with college programs, and guidance in finding the right fit. Families interested in collegiate swimming are encouraged to speak with the coaching staff for additional resources and individualized support.

Attendance Standards

- At least six practices a week (seven practices offered a week)
- All meets the athlete has qualified for

Maturity & Expectations

- At least 14 years old
- Goal-oriented and self-motivated to improve
- Demonstrate leadership within the team and mentoring younger athletes
- Train with purpose, intensity, and consistency at all times
- Compete with confidence, composure, and a high level of race awareness
- Serve as a role model by volunteering at a minimum of one session of a FCA developmental meet

Senior Attendance During High School Season (Nov-March)

FCA recognizes that many Senior athletes compete for their high school teams during the winter season. We encourage athletes to fully embrace and support their high school experience while maintaining a consistent commitment to FCA training.

Senior II

Senior II athletes have seven FCA training opportunities each week and are expected to attend a minimum of five FCA practices on a typical training week.

- High school dual meets and championship meets count as one FCA practice toward this expectation
- Athletes are encouraged to attend FCA morning practice before high school meets whenever possible
- Athletes who attend more than five FCA practices in a week exceed the minimum expectation and maximize their training opportunities

Senior I

Senior I athletes have six FCA training opportunities each week and are expected to attend three to four FCA practices on a typical training week.

- High school dual meets and championship meets count as one FCA practice toward this expectation
- Athletes are encouraged to attend additional FCA practices whenever their schedules allow

Consistent attendance is essential for long-term development, team culture, and competitive success. Athletes who regularly exceed the minimum expectations are best positioned to continue progressing and achieve their individual goals.

Swim Meets & Team Events

Meets & Events Calendar - Fall/Winter 2026-2027

USA Sanctioned Meets

Meets are mandatory for all athletes. Athletes are eligible for meets based on their age on the first day of the meet (e.g., 10u meets are for 10 and under athletes) and their practice group. Lead coaches will communicate which meets athletes should plan to attend.

To enter your athlete in a meet, you must sign in to your Commit Swimming Portal and commit via the checkbox. All meet Commitments and Decommits are due by September 28, 2026.

We understand that plans change. If you can no longer make a meet you have committed to, you must decommit and notify your Lead Coach via email at least 1 month before the meet, or you will be billed for all relevant meet fees.

Team Events

We also host a number of fun, team-building events throughout the season. These are designed to build team unity and provide an introduction to competitive meets for our newest athletes. Most Team Events are optional and will require an RSVP via a Google form. Attendance at our Blue-Grey meet is expected by all athletes to kick off the season!

Private Lessons

FCA offers private lessons as an additional opportunity for athletes to receive individualized instruction and focused technical feedback. Private lessons can be an effective tool for refining technique, addressing specific skills, or preparing for a particular goal. However, private lessons are intended to supplement, not replace, the learning and development that occurs during team practices.

Before requesting a private lesson, athletes are expected to:

- Meet the attendance expectations of their training groups
- Demonstrate consistent effort and engagement during practice
- Apply coaching feedback and corrections during regular training
- Take ownership of their development by asking questions and actively participating in practice

In many cases, the greatest improvements come from consistently attending practice, working hard, and implementing the coaching they are already receiving. Athletes who are not regularly attending practice or putting forth their best effort will benefit more from improving those habits before pursuing additional instruction through private lessons.

Private lessons are not guaranteed and are offered based on coach availability, facility availability, and the athlete's readiness to benefit from individualized instruction.

The coaching staff reserves the right to recommend that an athlete focus on attendance, effort, and practice habits before scheduling a private lesson. This ensures that private lesson time is used effectively and supports the athlete's long-term development.

Families interested in private lessons should contact the coaching staff for availability, rates, and scheduling procedures.

Team Uniform & Equipment

Practice Attire

All athletes must wear a swimsuit that doesn't restrict mobility, fits properly, and covers all appropriate areas. All athletes are encouraged to wear a swim cap during practice, and those with long hair are expected to do so.

Practice Equipment

All athletes, regardless of group, should bring a dry bag with a towel, goggles, caps, a water bottle, athletic clothes, etc.

Junior II, Senior I, and Senior II athletes are required to have all the equipment listed below for every practice.

- Short Fins
- Kickboards
- Pull Buoy
- Paddles (fit to hand size, no larger)
- Snorkel
- Mesh Bag

While not required, Novice and Junior I athletes are strongly recommended to bring their own kickboard and fins.

Equipment can be purchased at FCA's team store on the team's website.

Volunteer Program & Requirements

FCA is a volunteer-supported organization. The meets, team events, and athlete experiences we provide are only possible because of our families' time and dedication. Parent and guardian volunteers play an important role in supporting both home and away competitions, representing FCA with professionalism and sportsmanship, and helping create the positive team culture that makes our club successful.

Volunteer Requirement

Each registered FCA family is expected to complete the following volunteer commitment:

- Fall/Winter Registration: 10 volunteer hours
- Spring/Summer Registration: 5 volunteer hours

Volunteer requirements apply regardless of an athlete's level of meet participation.

Ways to Earn Volunteer Hours

Volunteer opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- Officiating an FCA USA Swimming meet (*see the Officiating section*) – 3 hours/session
- Meet volunteer (Timer, Runner, Marshall, Volunteer Check-In, etc.) – 3 hours
- Approved Snack Bar donation (*available on Sign-Up Genius*) – 2 hours
- Team social events (pizza parties, banquets, pool parties, etc.) – 2 hours

No prior experience is required for most positions. Training will be provided when needed.

Volunteer Buyout Fee

Families who do not complete their required volunteer hours will be assessed the following buyout fee at the conclusion of the season:

- Fall/Winter: \$400
- Spring/Summer: \$200

Families with extenuating circumstances should contact the FCA Director to discuss alternative ways to fulfill their volunteer commitment.

Officiating

To provide our athletes with consistent opportunities to train, compete, and participate in USA Swimming-sanctioned competitions, our team hosts several swim meets throughout the year.

All team-affiliated events are staffed by parent/guardian volunteers and FCA Coaches. Our meets cannot run successfully without the support and involvement of our families. A willingness to volunteer plays a significant role in shaping not only the meet's success but also your athlete's overall experience and connection to the team.

Regardless of whether an athlete is competing in a particular meet, being part of the full team environment builds a stronger sense of community, teamwork, and pride in FCA.

When serving in an officiating role, parents/guardians are there to support the meet's operation, not to coach athletes. All technical instructions, race strategy, and athlete feedback are the responsibility of the coaching staff. This helps maintain a consistent message for athletes and allows them to focus fully on their performance.

For those interested in becoming a USA Swimming Official, there are several benefits to getting involved:

- Reimbursement for required expenses (Background check and USA Swimming Registration)
- Official Middle Atlantic (MA) White polo
- Waived home meet fees
- Gratuity for each meet officiated (Amazon gift card)
- Access to catered hospitality during meets
- A front-row seat to the action on deck
- Opportunities to officiate at higher-level championship meets

Becoming an official is a rewarding way to support your athlete, stay engaged, and contribute to the success of the program.

Financial Policy

FCA allows all its members to choose between paying in full or paying in monthly installments throughout the season. All payments go through Commit Swimming. The breakdown of program costs is available on our website.

Refund Policy

For Fall/Winter & Spring/Summer registrations:

- No refunds will be given after week four of each season
- After week one of each program, refunds will be allowed minus 10%
- After week two of each program, refunds will be allowed minus 25%
- After week three of each program, refunds will be allowed minus 50%

If you registered for the **year-long registration**, no refunds will be given after 9/30/2026.

Meet Fees

Payments are to be completed through Commit Swimming. Each meet will have a \$5 credit card fee in addition to the meet fees. You can find your invoice and outstanding balance on Commit.

Caps & T-Shirts

Each athlete will receive two t-shirts and a silicone swim cap with their registration. These items are given out once a year, not once a season. If you wish to purchase more of these items, we will charge your Commit account. This includes in the event of lost or broken items.

Team Suits

Team suits can be purchased on the team store or through FCA. Suits purchased through FCA will be billed through Commit.

Communication Policy

At FCA, we value open, respectful, and productive communication between parents/guardians, athletes, coaches, and staff. We recognize the trust families place in our coaching staff and the important role coaches play in each athlete's athletic and personal development.

A positive team environment requires collaboration between coaches, athletes, administrators, and families. Proactive, appropriate, and prompt communication helps maintain a safe, supportive, and high-performing program, especially if concerns arise.

Concerns may range in severity and should be addressed accordingly. These may include, but are not limited to:

- General communication or coaching concerns
- Athlete well-being or team culture concerns
- Potential violations of USA Swimming Safe Sport or MAAPP policies
- Serious misconduct, including abuse or criminal behavior

Understanding the nature of the concern will help determine the appropriate reporting pathway.

Grievance Process

If an FCA member has a concern, the following process should be followed:

1. Initial Reporting: Concerns should first be discussed with the lead coach responsible for the athlete or group involved. The lead coach will work to address and resolve the concern directly with the involved parties. The Head Coach and/or Director of FCA will be included in communication as appropriate.

2. Resolution & Follow-Up: The lead coach will communicate the outcome once a resolution has been reached. If the concern cannot be resolved at this level, it will be escalated to the Head Coach and Director of FCA for further review.

Documentation

The lead facilitator (coach or administrator handling the concern) will document:

- A summary of the concern
- Any relevant information or evidence
- The resolution and outcome

Documentation will be shared with the Director of Auxiliary Programs. A summary of resolved concerns will be reviewed quarterly by FCA leadership.

Escalation & Appeals

If a resolution is not reached, the concern may be escalated to the Director of FCA for formal review. The Director will review all documentation, gather additional information if needed, and determine an outcome. Appeals will be reviewed within approximately 7 days, when possible, and a formal response will be provided within a reasonable timeframe. All decisions made by the Director of FCA are final.

Safe Sport & MAAPP Reporting

If a concern involves potential violations of USA Swimming Safe Sport or MAAPP policies, it must be reported immediately.

Report through one of the following channels:

- USA Swimming Safe Sport online reporting system
- USA Swimming Safe Sport Hotline: 833-5US-SAFE (587-7233)
- FCA Safe Sport Coordinator: Will Gallagher, wgallagher@friendscentral.org

Reportable violations include:

- Criminal activity
- Use, sale, or distribution of drugs
- Physical abuse or inappropriate touching (including massages/rubdowns by coaches)
- Coaches and athletes sharing hotel rooms
- Photos or videos taken in locker rooms
- Any violation of the Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policy (MAAPP)
- Any form of sexual misconduct

All reports of sexual misconduct will be handled in accordance with:

- USA Swimming Mandatory Reporting requirements
- The FCS Student/Family Handbook
- Applicable Pennsylvania state law

Meeting Schedule

Parent/Guardian Kickoff Meeting (Mandatory)

Wednesday, August 26 | 5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Shallcross Meeting Room

Topics: Team vision & culture, Parent Handbook, season schedule, USA Swimming registration, parent/coach roles, and meet the coaching staff, commit deadlines

Competition & Meet Commitment Meeting

Tuesday, September 8 | 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM

FCC Lecture Hall

Topics: Meet schedule, Commit Swimming process, entry deadlines (9/28), and communication expectations

New Family Meet Orientation

Tuesday, September 30 | 5:30 PM – 6:30 PM

Virtual

Topics: What to expect at a swim meet, what to bring, and meet-day procedures

10 & Under Meet Debrief

Wednesday, November 4 | 5:30 PM – 6:30 PM

FCC Lecture Hall

Topics: Review the first meet experience, answer questions, and prepare for future competitions