

Aquarians Parent Handbook



GRANDE PRAIRIE Aquarians SUMMER SWIM CLUB

GRANDE PRAIRIE SUMMER SWIM CLUB Parent Handbook 2026 Swim Season

WELCOME TO AQUARIANS!

We are excited to welcome you to our team and look forward to a summer of growth and improvement in and out of the water. This handbook serves as a comprehensive guide for all members of the Grande Prairie Aquarians Summer Swim Club, outlining essential policies, procedures, and expectations. From attendance policies to relay participation guidelines, the handbook provides clarity on various aspects of club operations. Swimmers and their families can refer to the handbook for information on meet schedules, communication channels, and equipment requirements. Additionally, the handbook emphasizes the importance of sportsmanship, respect, and teamwork, fostering a positive and supportive environment within the club.

SWIM SEASON

- The swim season begins on May 1, 2026 and concludes on August 17, 2026.
 - dates are subject to change in accordance with ASSA Swim Season Dates.

COST

- Swim Fees
 - \$650/swimmer which includes all swim practices, swim alberta fees, team events, and swim meet fees.
- Collect raffle tickets
 - \$200 Paid with Registration
 - The first 60 swimmers registered will receive 20, \$10 cash raffle tickets to sell, which can be used to offset the fundraising fee.

- Volunteer Bond
 - \$200 Deposit
 - All families are required to self-report and track their volunteer credits [CLICK HERE](#). Reimbursements will be processed on June 27th, July 28th and Aug 17th. To qualify for reimbursement, families must ensure their swimmers' tracking is up to date by these dates. Reimbursements will be issued to families via cheque.
 - [CLICK HERE](#) for more details.
 - Applicable to all swimmers with the exception of swimmers age 6 and under.
- Competitive Team Swimsuits
 - Swimsuits are an additional expense for all swimmers participating in swim meets this year. Swimmers who do not plan to participate in meets are not required to purchase a team swimsuit. (MUST be ordered BY May 14, 2026)
 - Tech Suits - \$130, reg swimsuit - \$90, jammers - \$65

LATE REGISTRATION

Late registration fees will be prorated monthly. Late registration fees are as follows:

- Register up to and including May 31st: \$650
- Register between June 1st - June 30th: \$480
- Register from July 1st onwards: \$310
 - ****All swimmers are required to pay a \$200 fundraising fee.
 - The first 60 swimmers registered will receive 20, \$10 cash raffle tickets to sell, which can be used to offset the fundraising fee.

PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Parent Conduct During Practice: Parents and families are kindly asked to refrain from engaging with their children and/or coaches during practice sessions. Swimmers age 8 and under must be accompanied by an adult on deck before and after swimming. Parents of children over the age of 8 should observe from the upper viewing deck area.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Swimmers will be assessed by the Coaches the first few weeks of the season and then assigned swim squads based on age, ability, experience and number of swimmers registered for the season. Your swimmer may change a squad over the season based on their progress, all decisions are at the discretion of the Head Coach.

The coaches training plans are based on a swimmer's regular attendance. While it's not mandatory to attend every practice, it's important for skill development and endurance.

Swimmers should make every effort possible to be on time for every practice. Swimmers may be asked to be on deck 15 minutes prior to your practice time for stretching and warm-up.

The club relies heavily on fundraising and donations to offset costs for families. This year's commitments include but are not limited to, cash raffles, county clean-ups, and bottle drives.

IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

- **Sports Engine Platform:** Visit www.gpaquarians.org for swimmer registration, meet details, team functions, and parent communication. Stay updated on club activities by frequently checking the site and reading your emails.
- **Stay Connected on Facebook:** Updates will also be shared on the Aquarians Facebook Page. Follow us at <https://www.facebook.com/grpraquarians> to remain informed.
- **Monthly Executive Board Meetings:** All members are invited and encouraged to attend our monthly meetings. For more information, please email aquariansgp@gmail.com.

GP AQUARIANS SUMMER SWIM CLUB – PARENT CONCERN PROTOCOL

We recognize that from time to time, concerns may arise. This protocol provides a respectful and effective process for raising and resolving those concerns while maintaining a positive swim experience for all.

Guiding Principles

- We aim for respectful, timely, and solution-focused communication.
- Our goal is to create a welcoming, enjoyable, and supportive environment for all swimmers, families, and staff.
- We value collaboration and mutual respect in addressing any issues that may arise.

Parent Liaisons

The primary role of a Parent Liaison is to help facilitate communication, connection, and collaboration between families, coaches and the swim club. Following the steps below ensures concerns are directed to the appropriate person and addressed efficiently.

Please refrain from addressing concerns directly with coaching staff, as they are focused on supporting swimmers during practice time.

Your Parent Liaisons are:

- **Krista Hurta** – Cell: 780-832-2625 | Email: krista.hurta@icloud.com
- **Megan La Flamme** – Cell: 780-518-1545 | Email: megan.lancaster@hotmail.com

Note: Parent Liaisons are not decision-makers but will ensure your concern is heard and directed appropriately.

Step 1: The 24-Hour Rule – Pause & Reflect

If you witness or experience something that causes concern:

- Wait at least 24 hours before taking action.
- This “cooling-off” period allows time for reflection and helps ensure any communication is calm, constructive, and productive.

Exception: If the concern involves a **potential injury, immediate safety risk, or dangerous behavior**, please notify a coach or board member **right away**. Urgent matters will be addressed immediately.

Step 2: Reach Out to a Parent Liaison

If, after 24 hours, your concern remains:

- Contact the designated Parent Liaison to share your concern.
- You may reach out by phone, email, text, or in person—whatever is most comfortable for you.
- Please include the nature of the concern, any relevant context, and what outcome you are hoping for.

Step 3: Follow-Up & Resolution

- The Parent Liaison will listen objectively and may ask clarifying questions.
- If needed, they will escalate the concern to the appropriate coach or board member.
- You will be kept informed about the steps taken or decisions made.

We ask that all parents follow this protocol when addressing concerns or negative experiences. We are committed to working together and thank you for your continued support in making this an incredible swim season for everyone.

All concerns will be handled with discretion and professionalism. Please note that anonymous complaints cannot be addressed.

EQUIPMENT

All swimmers registered by May 1, that plan to compete are strongly recommended to purchase a competitive TEAM swimsuit. You can increase the life of your swimsuit by hand rinsing in cool water with a mild detergent after each use and hang to dry.

All swimmers in groups Junior, Bronze, Silver, Gold must have their own equipment.

- Kickboards
- Fins
- Pull Buoys (Gold and Silver Group)
- Netted Bag
- Paddles (Gold Group)

SWIM MEETS

Participation in swim meets is highly encouraged for both swimmers and families, as it fosters team bonding and enhances swimmer development. While attendance is not mandatory, it offers an excellent opportunity to build team spirit. The fees for attending meets are covered in your registration, with travel and accommodations being at your own expense. Swimmers are expected to wear their Aquarians Team Swim Suit.

REGION A - SWIM MEET SCHEDULE 2026

| 2026 Swim Meet Schedule (tentative) | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| May 23 | Slave Lake |
| May 30 | Beaverlodge |
| June 6 | Fairview / Valleyview |
| June 13 | |
| June 20 | Grande Prairie |
| June 27 | Peace River & Smokey River |
| July 4 | |
| July 11 | Grimshaw / Spirit River / High Level |
| July 18 | |
| July 25 | High Prairie |
| August 1 | |
| August 8 | Regionals (Grande Prairie) |
| Aug 14 - 16 | Provincials |

What to Pack for Swim Meets:

- Aquarian Team Swimsuit
- Aquarian Team Swim Cap
- Goggles
- Extra Goggles
- Black Sharpie
- Snacks/Drinks
- Lunch
- Beach Mat/Blanket for Swimmer to Relax on Deck
- Extra Towels
- Water
- Lawn Chair for Parents
- **Download Meet Mobile - Track your swimmers times, results etc**

Swim meets are sanctioned events of the ASSA (Alberta Summer Swim Association), allowing swimmers to compete in up to four individual race events and up to two relay events. Coaches, in consultation with swimmers, finalize the selection of events before the meet. Most meet days typically commence between 7:00-8:00 am and conclude between 4:00-5:00 pm.

Meet Schedule

Families can access their swimmers' events through their TeamUnify/SportsEngine accounts. Heat Sheets/Sync Sheets are emailed to participating families before the event. Printed copies are typically not provided at most meets. If you prefer a printed copy, please bring one from home, or you can follow along using the Meet Mobile app (if available).

Individual races

Swimmers can compete in up to 4 individual races (events) at each meet. Events are selected through a collaborative process between coaches and swimmers during practice. At the beginning of the season, swimmers undergo assessments conducted by the Head Coach to evaluate their skills, abilities, and areas for improvement. Based on these assessments, along with factors such as age, experience, etc, coaches determine the most suitable races for each individual. Throughout the season, swimmers may have the opportunity to compete in various individual races, with decisions made by coaches to optimize their development and performance. Young swimmers just starting out are limited to events.

RELAYS

Relay races add an exciting and competitive element to swimming meets, highlighting teamwork, strategy, and individual contributions within a team setting. Relay races in swimming involve teams of swimmers competing together to complete a designated distance. There are two main types of relay races: the freestyle relay and the medley relay.

Freestyle Relay: In a freestyle relay, each swimmer on the team swims one leg of the relay using the freestyle stroke. Swimmers typically cover equal distances, such as 25 meters or 50 meters each, depending on the length of the race.

Medley Relay: A medley relay consists of four swimmers, each swimming a different stroke in the following order: backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, and freestyle. The order of strokes is predetermined and cannot be changed during the race.

RELAY PARTICIPATION POLICY

Expectation of Participation: All swimmers attending meets are expected to participate in relay events unless communicated to the coaches at the time of event opt-in.

- **Notification of Inability to Participate:** Swimmers who are **unable to commit to participating in relay events** must notify the coaches **at the time of event registration deadline**. This notification allows coaches to make necessary adjustments to team formations and ensure the fair and effective participation of all swimmers.
- **Consideration for Coaches' Efforts:** Coaches dedicate significant time and effort to organize and prepare relay teams for meets. Therefore, swimmers are urged to consider the impact of their decision on coaches' workload and team dynamics. One swimmer pulling out of a relay event can necessitate extensive reworking of team compositions, potentially disrupting the overall performance of the team.
- **Enforcement:** This relay participation policy will be enforced consistently and fairly by coaches. Swimmers who fail to adhere to this policy without valid reasons may face consequences determined by the coaching staff, including possible exclusion from future relay events.

***This policy will be reviewed periodically by the club executive to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with the club's objectives. Amendments may be made as necessary to address evolving needs or circumstances. Any updates or revisions to this policy will be communicated to all swimmers and coaches in a timely manner.

RELAY SELECTION POLICY FOR PROVINCIALS

The selection of relay teams for Provincials is at the sole discretion of the coaching staff. Factors considered in the decision include, but are not limited to, swimmer performance, times achieved during the season, participation in swim meets throughout the year, effort demonstrated during practices, consistency, teamwork, and overall contribution to the club. Coaches aim to create the most competitive relay teams while maintaining fairness and alignment with the club's goals. Whenever

possible, coaches strive to keep swimmers within similar age groups to ensure balanced and competitive relay teams.

All decisions regarding relay selections are final and will be communicated to swimmers and their families in advance of Regionals. The coaching staff reserves the right to adjust relay lineups as necessary to account for performance updates or unforeseen circumstances.

VOLUNTEERING

Swim meets require volunteers. **Expect to be asked to volunteer with officiating** (we will train you), set up, take down and all other important tasks that are needed to run the meet.

One member of your family will be required to take the Level 1 Officials course to learn how to be a **Timer and Safety Marshall** (online or in person session 1 hour). To qualify for the volunteer bond reimbursement you must sign up to volunteer for swim meets your swimmer attends and commit to either a morning or afternoon shift (or work both shifts, it's the best seat at the pool to watch the races). Each swimmer must receive 4 credits (max 10/family) to have their volunteer bond reimbursed. [CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO](#)

There are many other officials' roles the Club needs to fulfill by parent volunteers to run swim meets. To learn more reach out the Officials Chair Chris Caldwell: chrisdcaldwell@gmail.com

- Chief Timer (Level 2)
- Stroke & Turn judge (Level 2)
- Turn Only judge (Level 1)
- Starter (Level 2)
- Computer entry
- Runners
- Announcer
- Food room coordinator
- Chaperones

COMPETITION & DIVING READINESS STANDARDS

All swimmers must complete competition readiness. Coaches will work with swimmers to ensure readiness. If you have any questions regarding your swimmer's readiness, please don't hesitate to reach out.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO](#)

SWIMMING DURING YOUR PERIOD

It is safe to swim while on your period and it does not increase your risk of infection. If you swim while on your period without wearing any feminine care products, the water pressure can temporarily slow your flow, but it won't stop it completely.

It is recommended swimmers use tampons, menstrual cups, or period-friendly swimwear. Swimming with a sanitary pad in place is not permitted.

We understand that menstruation experiences vary, and some may not feel comfortable swimming during their menstrual cycle. We respect each individual's choice regarding their participation in swimming practices or events during this time. Should you decide not to swim, we encourage you to inform the coach or event organizer; we aim to support alternative training options where possible.

SPORTSMANSHIP & RESPECT

The Grande Prairie Aquarians Summer Swim Club, place a strong emphasis on fostering an environment of good sportsmanship and respect among all members. Whether in the pool or outside of it, displaying integrity, fairness, and respect towards coaches, officials, teammates, and competitors is fundamental to our club's values.

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP

Good sportsmanship encompasses more than just winning or losing—it's about how we conduct ourselves during every aspect of our involvement with the club. We encourage all swimmers and parents to:

- Always exhibit graciousness in victory and dignity in defeat.
- Cheer for teammates and opponents alike, recognizing and celebrating their achievements.
- Accept decisions made by officials with respect and without dispute.
- Maintain a positive attitude and support fellow swimmers, regardless of individual performances.
- Uphold the spirit of fair play, honesty, and integrity in all interactions.

RESPECT FOR COACHES, OFFICIALS, AND TEAMMATES

Respect is the cornerstone of any successful team. As members of the Grande Prairie Aquarians, we show respect by:

- Listening attentively to coaches' instructions and guidance during training sessions and competitions.
- Following the direction of officials and demonstrating patience and understanding towards their decisions.

- Treating teammates with kindness, empathy, and encouragement, fostering a supportive and inclusive team environment.
- Valuing the diverse talents, backgrounds, and contributions of all individuals within the club.

ADHERENCE TO THE CLUB'S CODE OF CONDUCT

Our club's code of conduct serves as a guide for behavior both in and out of the pool, reflecting our commitment to excellence, sportsmanship, and respect. By adhering to the code of conduct, we pledge to:

- Conduct ourselves in a manner that reflects positively on the club and its values.
- Abide by all rules and regulations set forth by the club, Swim Alberta, and the Alberta Summer Swim Association.
- Respect the facilities, equipment, and resources provided by the club, ensuring their proper use and maintenance.
- Uphold the principles of fairness, honesty, and integrity in all interactions with fellow members and the broader swimming community.
- Take responsibility for our actions and strive to resolve conflicts or disputes in a constructive and respectful manner.

By embracing the principles of good sportsmanship and respect, we not only enhance the overall experience for ourselves and others but also uphold the proud traditions and legacy of the Grande Prairie Aquarians Summer Swim Club. Together, let's strive to create a positive and inclusive environment where every member can thrive and excel both in and out of the water.

24-HOUR RULE

The 24-hour rule encourages individuals to take a 24-hour pause before addressing concerns or issues. The 24-hour rule helps maintain a positive and supportive environment within the club, ensuring effective communication and mutual respect among all members. Embracing this guideline contributes to a successful and fulfilling experience for everyone involved.

- Refrain from immediate communication or action regarding club matters.
- Reflect on the situation and consider different perspectives.
- Initiate communication after the 24-hour period to address the concern in a respectful and constructive manner.

Benefits:

- Promotes calmness and clarity in communication.
- Reduces conflict by preventing impulsive reactions.
- Encourages respectful dialogue and problem-solving.

- Enhances decision-making by allowing time for reflection.

REFUND POLICY

Refund Eligibility: Swim fees may be refunded under the following circumstances.

Please note: A \$50 admin fee will be applied to all refunds on credit card transactions.

- Withdrawal from the club before the start of the swim season.
- Inability to participate in the swim season due to unforeseen circumstances, such as relocation or medical reasons. Refunds will be prorated by weeks swimmer able to swim.
- Dissatisfaction with club services or programming, subject to review by club executives.

REFUND AMOUNT AFTER APRIL 15TH

- Refunds will be prorated by weeks swimmer able to swim.
- Swim Alberta Registration Fees are non refundable and will be taken out of refund total
- Swimsuit cost are non refundable

*Please note: ***Fundraising fees are non refundable after March 30th.*

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

The Grande Prairie Aquarians Summer Swim Club, a parent-led volunteer organization established in 1982, has been offering competitive swimming programs during the summer. Affiliated with Swim Alberta and the Alberta Summer Swim Association (ASSA), the club adheres to the policies and guidelines set by these governing bodies. ASSA's mission is to promote swimming as a healthy exercise, enhancing the physical fitness of young individuals and fostering competitive swimming. As a registered not-for-profit society, the club operates under the oversight of a volunteer executive board and directors who manage club affairs and the swim season's fiscal aspects.

The club operates on an approved annual budget, sourced from swimmer registration fees (which may vary annually), donations, sponsorships, grants, gaming funds, and fundraising initiatives. With several experienced and qualified swim coaches, the typical swim season runs from May to August, accommodating approximately 60 swimmers aged 6 and above.

Similar to many parent-led youth sports organizations, our club heavily relies on volunteers. We extend our gratitude in advance for your support in ensuring a successful swim season.

Shelly Rutherford
Aquarians President

2025 EXECUTIVE

President Shelly Rutherford presidentaquariansgp@gmail.com

Vice President Brian Udey aquariansgp@gmail.com

Secretary Megan LaFlamme aquariansgp@gmail.com

Treasurer Cory Wickberg aquariansgp@gmail.com

Director Krista Hurta

Director Sarah Sorceneli

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