

USA SWIMMING

NATIONAL OFFICIALS CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

In May 2004 the Certification Task Group of the USA Swimming Officials Committee was charged with developing a new National Certification program.

The Mission Statement developed for this committee is:

"To develop officials who are competent, current and consistent from the LSC level meet to the highest level in our sport through a progressive training program based on an accumulation of experience acquired by specific meet attendance, mentoring and constructive evaluation."

The idealized mission outcome will be to have every USA Swimming official certified at the highest level so that all swimmers, from novice to Olympian, will have the best, consistent and fairest possible deck of officials. While this outcome may not be even remotely achievable or practical, it should still be the target.

This means that realistic (not nearly impossible) certification standards should be set and upheld, and no official should be prevented from advancing if they meet performance standards, experience, education and participation requirements.

In the past, other than for initial LSC certification in a position and, to some extent, the position of National Championship Starter, advancement to National and National Championship Certifications was by working the position at the level of meet for which qualification was sought. Also, after USA Swimming moved away from 6 annual Junior National Meets a number of years ago and moves to more automation of timing and some judging functions at National Meets, the number of positions that need to be filled on the National Championship deck have been reduced dramatically. The use of National Meets to train and elevate officials is no longer practical.

The new program qualifies officials to be selected for higher level meets; particularly National Championships. If the program is executed properly, National Certification should indicate that the official can be placed in that position on a deck in any LSC and be expected to perform to the certified level.

Achievement of the highest level of certification in a position is one the requirements to be selected to the National Championship deck, but not a guarantee. The achievement of the standard should be presented as the primary objective.

Invitations to work on the National Championship deck will still have to be earned by qualified officials identified to have outstanding skills, who put in the effort to maintain them, and who readily transfer those skills back to all swimmers and officials by teaching and example, and generally help to raise everybody's standards. The more officials that meet those criteria - the better, even if it means that highly qualified officials may not get to work as many National Meets that they'd like to.

The Program also needs a group of highly experienced, motivated senior officials - National Evaluators - with the mind set to train, encourage and evaluate officials and to identify those with exceptional aptitude or potential. To be selected to, and serve in, this group should be considered one of the highest honors a USA Swimming Official can achieve.

NATIONAL OFFICIALS CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

SUMMARY:

There are three levels of National Certification for each of 5 positions:

- **Stroke and Turn Judge,**
- **Chief Judge,**
- **Starter,**
- **Deck Referee** and
- **Administrative Referee.**

Note: The positions of “Referee (non Starter)” and Timer, Clerk of Course, Announcer, etc. are not included in this program.

N1 The first level in a position - remains with, and is administered by, the LSC and recognizes that the official:

- meets “minimum standards,” and
- reliably and competently performs in the position at LSC level meets with minimal supervision.

In some LSC’s this may be when the official is certified. In others it may be a number of meets after certification.

LSC’s may decide if they want to use the designation **N1** or not, however, advancement to higher National Levels requires a year of experience at the equivalent of the “**N1**” level.

N2 The second level in a position – is administered by the National Officials Committee and recognizes that an official is experienced and has been evaluated as capable of working the position at Sectional, Zone, Grand Prix and similar higher profile meets.

Advancement to N2 Certification requires:

- At least one year of experience in the position at the N1 level, or equivalent,
- At least 12 sessions at 6 or more LSC meets as an N1 official in the position in the 24 months prior to application,
- Participation in the training of other officials as a mentor or as a clinic or deck instructor,
- Participation in LSC or higher-level clinics or briefings, and
- Reading the current edition of the USA Swimming Officials Manual as published on the USA Swimming website.

The applicant attests to all of the above requirements.

Also required is:

- A recommendation from The LSC Officials Chair, and
- A report from a “National Evaluator” indicating that the candidate has demonstrated the appropriate qualities and skills over several sessions and recommending advancement.

Evaluations should be over about 3 sessions for each position. Evaluations may be at Officials Qualifying Meets or, preferably, at a higher-level meet that meets most of the requirements of an Officials Qualifying Meet (e.g. prelims and finals, senior swimmers, meet deck protocol approaches National Championship standards, etc.).

N3 The **third level** in a position – is administered by the National Officials Committee and recognizes that an official has the experience, skills and knowledge to be considered for selection to work National Championship level meets.

Advancement to N3 Certification requires:

- At least one year of certification in the position at the N2 level, and in the 24 months before application for advancement,
- At least 12 sessions at 6 or more LSC meets,
- Participation in the training of other officials as a mentor or as a clinic or deck instructor,
- Participation in LSC or higher-level clinics or briefings, and immediately prior to application,
- reading the current edition of the USA Swimming Officials Manual published on the USA Swimming website.

The applicant attests to all of the above requirements.

Also required are:

- Recommendation from The LSC Officials Chair, and in the 24 months before application for advancement:
- At least 4 sessions at each of 2, or more, "Officials Qualifying Meets". To receive an evaluation and credit for the meet, the candidate must work 4 sessions in the position and at least 80% of sessions at the meet. Sessions not being evaluated do not have to be in the position. *
- Reports from "National Evaluators" at each of the Qualifying Meets indicating that the candidate has demonstrated the appropriate qualities and skills and recommending advancement to the position.
- For Stroke and Turn Judge one (1) satisfactory evaluation report is required from one of the two Officials Evaluation Meets. For Chief Judge, Starter and Deck Referee, satisfactory evaluations are required from two Officials Evaluation Meets: an Initial Evaluation and a Final Evaluation.
- For Deck Referee and Starter – completion of the "Final Evaluation" requirements for those positions.
- For advancement to N3 Chief Judge, Starter, Deck Referee or Administrative Referee the candidate must also have N3 certification as a Stroke and Turn Judge and National Championship experience as an official.

* Note: For an N3 evaluation to be valid and for the meet to be used for advancement credit (N3 Stroke and Turn Judge 2nd meet) the official must work at least 80% of the total number of sessions in the Qualifying Meet. The minimum session requirement is capped at 6 sessions. For example - work 4sessions at a 4 or 5 session meet; work 5 sessions at a 6 session meet; 6 sessions at a 7 or more session meet. Time trials DO NOT COUNT as sessions at Officials Qualifying Meets and cannot be used for evaluations at any level.

A national database for officials will show at least the highest level **above N1** for each position.

Re-certification

N1

Re-certification at the N1 level remains with, and is administered by, the LSC.

N2

In order to re-certify at the N2 level in a position, the following is required:

- Maintenance of LSC certification in the position, and
- In the 24 months before application for recertification:
 - At least 12 sessions at 4 or more LSC level meets,
 - Continued participation in the training of other officials as a mentor, or a clinic or deck instructor,
 - Review of the current edition of the USA Swimming Officials Manual published on the USA Swimming website.

The applicant attests to all of the above requirements.

Also required are:

- At least 4 sessions at each of 2, or more, "Officials Qualifying Meets". A minimum of 4 of the total sessions are required in the positions for which re-certification is requested as follows:
 - Administrative Referee and Deck Referee: - at least 2 sessions as Meet Referee, Deck Referee or Admin. Referee with any balance of the 4 sessions as Starter, Chief Judge or Stroke and Turn Judge.
 - Starter: - at least 2 sessions as Starter with any balance of the 4 evaluation sessions as Administrative Referee, Referee, Chief Judge or Stroke & Turn Judge.
 - Chief Judge: - at least 3 sessions as Chief Judge, Administrative Referee, Deck Referee or Meet Referee with any balance of the 4 sessions as Starter or Stroke and Turn Judge.
 - Stoke and Turn Judge: - At least four sessions.
Satisfactory Re-certification evaluations as Chief Judge, Starter, Deck Referee or Administrative Referee at the N2 level imply satisfactory evaluation as N2 Stroke and Turn Judge.

These sessions may be worked at one of the Officials Qualifying Meets or spread between the 2 required meets.

- Reports from a "National Evaluator" from the required sessions at "Officials Qualifying Meets" that the official has maintained the appropriate N2 qualities and skills for the re-certification positions.

Note: Satisfactory Initial or Final N3 evaluation in a position or an N3 evaluation that does not meet N3 standard for a position but is noted as acceptable for N2 re-certification, may be used to satisfy N2 re-certification evaluation requirements for a position. Satisfactory N3 evaluations may need to be used for N2 re-certification if all other advancement requirements are not completed before expiry of current N2 and N3 certifications.

N3

In order to re-certify at the N3 level in a position, the following is required:

- Maintenance of LSC certification in the position, and
- In the 24 months before application for recertification:
 - At least 12 sessions at 4 or more LSC level meets,
 - Continued participation in the training of other officials as a mentor, or a clinic or deck instructor,
 - Review of the current edition of the USA Swimming Officials Manual published on the USA Swimming website.

The applicant attests to all of the above requirements.

Also required are:

- At least 4 sessions at each of 2, or more, “Officials Qualifying Meets”. A minimum of 4 of the total sessions are required in the positions for which re-certification is requested as follows:
 - Administrative Referee and Deck Referee: - at least 2 sessions as Meet Referee, Deck Referee or Admin. Referee with any balance of the 4 sessions as Starter, Chief Judge or Stroke and Turn Judge.
 - Starter: - at least 2 sessions as Starter with any balance of the 4 evaluation sessions as Administrative Referee, Referee, Chief Judge or Stroke & Turn Judge.
 - Chief Judge: - at least 3 sessions as Chief Judge, Administrative Referee, Deck Referee or Meet Referee with any balance of the 4 sessions as Starter or Stroke and Turn Judge.
 - Stroke and Turn Judge: - At least four sessions.

Satisfactory Re-certification evaluations as Chief Judge, Starter, Deck Referee or Administrative Referee at the N3 level imply satisfactory evaluation as N3 Stroke and Turn Judge.

Satisfactory re-certification evaluation as N3 Stroke and Turn Judge is required if Stroke and Turn Judge is the only N3 level position, however, if an N2 certification is held in at least one other position, satisfactory N3 Stroke and Turn Judge re-certification evaluation is only required for two sessions – i.e. a satisfactory N2 Deck Referee evaluation cannot be used for N3 Stroke and Turn Judge re-certification.

It is recommended that officials with N3 certifications in positions other than Stroke and Turn Judge request evaluation over several sessions in the Stroke and Turn Judge position to ensure they are maintaining their skills in this most important position.

These required evaluation sessions may be worked at one of the two Officials Qualifying Meets or spread between the 2 meets.

- Reports from a “National Evaluator” from the required sessions at “Officials Qualifying Meets” that the official has maintained the appropriate N3 qualities and skills for the re-certification positions.

Initial certifications in N2 and N3 positions will usually expire on either June 30 or December 31 of the year that gives at least two full years and less than 2.5 years of certification. All required activity must take place within the 24 months preceding completion of the application for certification or re-certification.

Re-certification applications may be submitted up to 6 months prior to expiration. Re-certifications will generally expire 2 years after the expiration date on the expiring certification.

If new N2 or N3 certification applications do not include the required evaluations to re-certify in N2 positions that are not being advanced, or in existing N3 positions, the new expiry date may only be advanced to the next expiry day plus one year.

RE-CERTIFICATION

You May Re-Certify as*:	If Current (New) Certifications are -									
	S&T		Chief Judge		Starter		Deck Referee		Admin Referee	
	N2	N3	N2	N3	N2	N3	N2	N3	N2	N3
S&T	N2	N3	N2	N3	N2	N3	N2	N3	N2	N3
Chief Judge			N2	N3						
Starter					N2	N3				
Deck Referee							N2	N3		
Administrative Referee									N2	N3

* Provided the re-certification position specific requirements for each position are met, e.g. The number of sessions as a Starter to re-certify as a Starter (See below).
The basic meet participation, training and mentoring activities are required for an individual to re-certify.

To re-certify in N2 and N3 Stroke and Turn Judge, Chief Judge, Starter, Referee and Administrative Referee positions, satisfactory evaluations, by National Evaluators over a total of at least 4 sessions at one or both of the two required Officials Qualifying Meets, shall be as follows: -

- Administrative Referee and Deck Referee: - at least 2 sessions as Meet or Deck Referee or Admin. Referee with any balance of the 4 sessions as Starter, Chief Judge or Stroke & Turn Judge.
- Starter: - at least 2 sessions as Starter with any balance of the 4 evaluation sessions as Administrative Referee, Deck or Meet Referee, Chief Judge or Stroke & Turn Judge.
- Chief Judge: - at least 3 of the 4 sessions as Chief Judge or 2 sessions Administrative Referee or Deck Referee at the same "N" level. Any balance of the 4 sessions may be in the Starter or Stroke & Turn Judge position.
- Stoke and Turn Judge: - at least four sessions, unless satisfactorily evaluated for re-certification as Admin. Referee, Deck Referee, Starter or Chief Judge. If N3 Stroke and Turn Judge is the only N3 or N2 level position, 4 Stroke and Turn Judge evaluation sessions are required. If satisfactory N2 re-certification evaluations for other N2 level positions are completed, only 2 sessions are required.

Re-certification evaluation for more than one position may be completed at one Officials Qualifying meet, provided the minimum number of evaluation sessions for each position are worked.

Examples: - Official is N3 S&T, N2 CJ, N2 Starter, N3 Deck Ref. Satisfactory evaluation sessions needed - 2 as N3 Deck Ref and 2 as N2 Starter will satisfy the re-certification evaluation requirements for all positions.

- Official is N3 S&T, N3 Deck Ref, N2 Admin Ref. Satisfactory evaluation sessions needed -2 as N3 Deck Ref and 2 as S&T Judge.

- Official is N3 S&T, N2 Deck Ref, N2 CJ, N2 Starter. Satisfactory evaluation sessions needed – 2 as N3 S&T, 2 as N2 Deck Ref and 2 as N2 Starter.

Attendance at two Officials Qualifying meets (at least 4 sessions at each meet) is still required in the 24 month prior to application even if satisfactory evaluations for all positions are completed at one of them.

DEFINITIONS:

Officials Qualifying Meets ... Similar to previous "National Certification Meets". May include Regional, Zone, Sectional, Grand Prix, and other meets approved by the National Officials Committee. A "National Evaluator" will also have to be present at those meets. Some "Officials Qualifying Meets" may be assigned "National Evaluators" specifically to make final evaluations of N3 Starter and N3 Deck Referee candidates. National Championship Meets are also Officials Qualifying Meets for the purposes of re-certification evaluation, however only 1 National Championship Meet may be used to satisfy part of the participation requirements for re-certification or advancement. Time trials at National Championship meets may be available for evaluation of candidates N3 Starter. See "Guidelines for Evaluation of N3 Starters at Time Trials of National Championship Level Meets."

Mentoring ... Working one on one with officials to help train them, appointment as a "mentor" at a meet (LSC through Officials Qualifying Meets and, possibly, Time Trials at National Championship Meets), etc.

Seminars and High Level Briefings ... could include "swimposiums," pre session briefings at National Championship meets, presenting training clinics for new or advancing LSC officials, attending pre meet meetings of assigned officials at National Championship meets (recommended for N3 CJ, Starter, Deck Referee and Admin Referee candidates – make a request to the meet referee in advance), etc.

National Evaluators ... Very Experienced Officials qualified by the National Officials Committee to evaluate officials for advancement and re-certification.

Minimum requirement - several years as a N2 Referee and N3 S&T certification, preferably with deck experience at several National Meets. Evaluators meeting the minimum requirement may evaluate for advancement to all N2 positions and to N3 Stroke and Turn Judge. Evaluators with other N3 certifications may perform Initial N3 evaluations in positions they have N3 certification and for all N2 and N3 re-certifications.

Certain **National Evaluators** are appointed to make Final Evaluations of candidates for N3 Chief Judge, Starter, Deck Referee and Administrative Referee. Generally - they are N3 Officials with National Championship experience in the positions that they evaluate.

National Evaluators **may** participate in the officiating of meets where they are evaluating officials. If they do, it is suggested that the number of candidates for advancement be limited to allow fair and objective evaluation. Evaluators are most effective when they do not have other meet duties and interact with and mentor candidates before, during and after evaluations.

All National Evaluators will be:

- aware of current national officiating procedures, and
- be available for clinics, briefings, presentations, clarification of issues and mentoring related to the art of USA Swimming officiating.

Qualified National Evaluators may get re-certification evaluation credit if they perform their duties, including timely submission of all required reports, as "full time" evaluators at Officials Qualifying Meets.

TRANSITIONING

Officials with "National" or "National Championship" certifications from the previous program that expire on, or later than, December 31, 2004 will be deemed to have equivalent N2 or N3 certifications as follows:

- All **equivalent N2** and **N3** certifications derived from certifications that expired on December 31, 2004, or later, will expire on December 31, 2007, unless a properly completed application for re-certification, or certification in a new position at a higher level, is completed and accepted.

It is requested that officials with existing National and National Championship certifications that expire on or before December 31, 2006 complete the requirements and apply for re certification prior to December 31, 2006.

- After December 31, 2005 no "National" or "National Championship" - new, renewal or upgrade - certifications will be issued.
- Note that the position of "Referee, Non Starter" is no longer recognized. N2 or N3 Certification will be shown for each position that the official qualifies. The only presumptions are:
 - that N2 Chief Judges, Starters, Deck Referees or Administrative Referees are also qualified as N2 Stroke and Turn Judge
 - an official with any N3 qualifications transitions to N3 Stroke in addition to their other N3 position. Qualification as a N3 Stroke and Turn Judge and experience as an official at a National Championship meet is a prerequisite to advance to any other N3 qualification.
 - Old "National" Referees and Referees -non Starter also transition to N2 Chief Judge,
 - Old "National Championship" Referees and Referees -non Starter also transition to N3 Chief Judge,
 - Old "National Championship" Referees also transition to N3 Starter. (There is no such presumption for National Referee)

Equivalent N2 and N3 Certification	Current Certification - National (N) and National Championship (NC)											
	S&T		Chief Judge		Starter		Referee (non starter)		Referee		Admin Referee	
	N	NC	N	NC	N	NC*	N	NC	N	NC	N	NC
S&T	N2	N3	N2	N3	N2	N3	N2	N3	N2	N3	N2	N3
Chief Judge			N2	N3			N2	N3	N2	N3		
Starter					N2	N3*			N2	N3		
Deck Referee							N2	N3	N2	N3		
Administrative Referee											N2	N3

* Includes Officials on the "National Championship Eligible" list i.e. two passing evaluations for Junior National or National Championship standard. Officials with one passing evaluation for Junior National or National Championship standard require only a second passing "Final" evaluation from a qualified National Evaluator to receive N3 Starter Certification. Officials previously evaluated at "sectional" standard are eligible for N2 Starter Certification.

Transitioning Certification Table

From the application for approval of a meets as

Qualifying Meets for National Officials Certification...

.... provide opportunities for evaluation of USA Swimming officials for **N3 Certification** and **N2 and N3 Re-certification**.

They may include Regional, Zone, Sectional, Grand Prix, and other meets (eg LSC Championships) approved by the National Officials Committee.

Application for approval as a National Certification Qualifying Meet for officials must be made to the National Officials Committee at least 30 days, preferably 60 days, prior to the start of the meet.

Requirements for a Meet to be approved –

1. Meet Referee – **N2 or N3**. If the Meet Referee is not, or will not be, a National Evaluator, National Evaluator(s) must also be at the meet, not necessarily in an assigned or deck position, during all evaluation sessions. If the Meet Referee is an Evaluator, or the Evaluator is also working as an official, it is suggested that the number of evaluation candidates be limited to allow fair, proper and objective evaluation. Provision of approved National Evaluators is the responsibility of the meet host or LSC. Recommendations may be solicited from the USA Swimming Officials Committee.
2. Meet Length - At least two days, with at least 4 sessions with preliminaries and finals
3. A broad range of senior events in evaluation sessions,
4. Expected to attract and include national caliber swimmers (capable of achieving National Championship and Junior Championship qualifying times)
5. Fully automatic timing system must be used.
6. Minimum number of officials
 - for meet - 1 Head Referee,
 - per session – 1 Administrative Referee (recommended), 1 Deck Referee, 1 Starter, 1 Chief Judge, and, if possible, 2 Stroke Judges and 1 Turn Judge for every 2 lanes at the start and turn ends.
7. Recommended maximum number of “assigned” officials
 - for meet – 1 Head Referee, 1 Administrative Referee, 1 Team Lead Chief Judge
 - per session - 1 Assistant Administrative Referee, 4 Deck Referees, 4 Starters, 4 Chief Judges.
8. Officials briefings observed, or given, by a National Evaluator must precede each session.
9. Current USA Swimming rules must be followed.
10. Meet must be open to all applicants for evaluation from LSC’s within the Region. To plan use of officials it is recommended that applications for evaluation be required.
11. The Meet Information Letter must include a statement that the meet has been designated a National Qualifying Meet for Officials and include any “application for evaluation” requirements.

Some “Qualifying Meets” may be assigned “**National Evaluators**” to “final evaluate” **N3 Starter** and **N3 Referee** candidates.

–National Evaluators ...

Very Experienced Officials qualified by the National Officials Committee to evaluate officials for advancement and re-certification. Minimum requirement - several years as a N2 Referee and N3 S&T certification, preferably with deck experience at several National Meets. Evaluators meeting the minimum requirement may evaluate for advancement to all N2 positions and to N3 Stroke and Turn Judge. Evaluators with other N3 certifications may perform Initial N3 evaluations in positions they have N3 certification and for all N2 and N3 re-certifications.

Certain **National Evaluators** are appointed to make Final Evaluations of candidates for N3 Chief Judge, Starter, Referee and Administrative Referee. Generally - N3 Officials with National Championship experience in the positions that they evaluate.

National Evaluators **may** participate in the officiating of meets where they are evaluating officials. If they do, it is suggested that the number of candidates for advancement be limited to allow fair and objective evaluation.

All National Evaluators will be:

- aware of current national officiating procedures, and
- be available for clinics, briefings, presentations, clarification of issues and mentoring related to the art of USA Swimming officiating.