



Ohio High School Athletic Association
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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING THE PARA-SWIM INITIATIVE – 2020

The OHSAA Board of Directors at its October 2019 meeting approved the inclusion of para-swimming events for students with disabilities beginning with the 2020 tournaments. With the objectives of mirroring the success of the para events for track and field athletes and opening up competition for students who have not had an opportunity in high school swimming, the OHSAA provides this guidance document to assist schools, their students and parents in understanding the current process.

Q. 1. Who is eligible to participate in para-swimming?

A. All athletes in grades 9-12 who meet the OHSAA Eligibility standards are eligible for evaluation. Students who fall into one of two categories as identified by the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee Para-Swimming Division are eligible to compete. These categories are defined within these two documents 1) medical verification form <https://www.ohsaa.org/Portals/0/Sports/Swimming-Diving/ParaSwimVerificationForm.pdf?ver=2019-10-02-162057-750> and 2) OHSAA tournament regulations <https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Sports/Swimming-Diving/SDTournamentRegs.pdf?sv=2017-04-17&sr=b&si=DNNFileManagerPolicy&sig=qvZp%2BMulccR6OXm%2BMMu8k6DJWVLJMV59WFMG5Cx9yqc%3D>

Athletes must also meet all entry deadlines as stipulated in the OHSAA tournament regulations.

Q. 2. How is a student placed into a category and registered for OHSAA competition?

A. Each student must be evaluated by a physician (MD or DO) on a yearly basis and placed into a category by that medical professional. The OHSAA recommends that this process be completed at the time the student is evaluated for the Pre-Participation Physical Examination which must be done every 13 months. The medical verification form is due to the OHSAA no later than the date and time when final swimming entries are due. In 2021, that date is February 3 at Noon.

Q. 3. How many and what events may a para-swimmer enter?

A. This competition is exclusively for students with disabilities who have had limited opportunities to compete in any OHSAA tournaments in the past. Thus, each swimmer may enter no more than two events in the category into which he or she has been authorized. For 2021, the two events are the 50 yard freestyle (boys and girls) and the 100 yard backstroke (for boys and girls).

Q. 3. At what tournament will these events be conducted?

A. The two events in each category for boys and girls shall be competed at the **State Tournament only** in 2021. There is no divisional competition in these two events so students from Division 1 schools will compete against students from Division 2. Schools with para athletes will fill out the OHSAA verification form by February 3, 2021 and email Pam Cook (pamswim@aol.com) the para athlete name, school, grade, gender, events (50 FR or 100BK) by February 8, 2021.

Q. 4. May a para-swimmer enter any other events, including relays or other individual events at the Sectional Tournaments?

A. No para-swimmer may enter any other events including relays or other individual events at the sectional tournaments or at the District Tournaments. Please keep in mind that this competition has been reserved exclusively for students with disabilities. In addition, NFHS rules prohibit a swimmer from entering more than two individual events.

Q. 5. Are these events scored and are medals awarded?

A. The performances of these para-swimmers shall not be included in team scoring. Students shall earn medals, up through eight places, and shall be recognized in the awards ceremony just as all other athletes are recognized.

Q. 6. Can para-swimmers compete against able-bodied athletes in the same race during the regular season?

A. Yes. This decision is under the jurisdiction of the contest management for the regular season. Boys and Girls heats may also be combined if the number of lanes permits.

Q. 7. Are the NFHS uniform rules in place for para-swimmers?

A. Yes. All uniform rules are in effect. Any request for an exception must be approved by the OHSAA and requested by the school administrator.

Q. 8. Can Para-Swimmers or different genders and/or categories compete in the same races?

A. Yes. Subject to the manager's discretion in OHSAA tournaments and based on the number of athletes per gender and per category, the decision to compete some of the athletes in the same heat may be made. This combination will not affect the presentation of awards to athletes in each gender and category.

Q. 9. Where can I get more information and support for para-swimming?

A. Visit US Paralympics <https://www.teamusa.org/US-Paralympics.aspx> Swimming <https://www.teamusa.org/US-Paralympics/Sports/Swimming> Find a Sports Club Near You <https://www.teamusa.org/US-Paralympics/find-a-club>