

The National Officials Committee has created a list of best practices to aid LSCs in the retention of officials.

Choose LSC officials leaders very carefully. Ensure that your leadership is not only strong in the technical skills of the job, but is also able to motivate, collaborate, and mentor a diverse team of individuals with different needs and backgrounds.

Use proactive, interpersonal, two-way communication effectively as a retention tool. Keep in touch about meets and other things by way of frequent, timely, and positive communication and many good hints and kudos to officials for service above and beyond the necessary.

Meet the three basic needs of officials:

- 1. The need to feel their work is necessary and appreciated:** Reward their efforts. Use patches, hats, pins, and shirts as you give them a hardy handshake and a sincere “Thank You” for a job well done. Always debrief your officials at the end of a session. You receive good feedback and they know their views are important to you. Value their time. Don’t keep them in endless meetings. Start the meets and end the meets on time so that officials know what to expect. Always emphasize that the officials are a team both on and off-deck. Judge the performance of the team as they work the meet. It is good when they work together and help one another perform better. Educate teams to help officials with registration and other expenses. Some LSCs have officiating travel funds to help officials experience national meets and bring the knowledge gained back to the LSC.
- 2. The need to have fun and enjoy the association with other officials:** At a few large meets each year, plan a “decompression session” with all officials attending, strictly social, no hierarchy, just good friends on equal footing enjoying an hour together. Set a happy tone at the officials briefing each session. Tell a funny experience about yourself to disarm and let the officials know that you know you are human and imperfect just like everyone else in the room. Always give plenty of rest and food and water. Remember SUCCESS SELLS. Recognize the contribution of the officials’ families at award banquets, etc. The family sacrificed so the official could be on deck.

- 3. The need to have a well-defined path and steps outlined for their advancement, if that is their desire:** Make sure that every official has copies of the minimum standards and all LSC requirements and timelines for advancement. Develop training lesson plans for advancement to new assignments such as starter, chief judge, admin referee, or deck referee, and re-certification seminars for all positions to keep officials informed as the protocols change in USA Swimming. Keep them as short as possible. Be sure to offer leadership training to all wishing to advance in the ranks of officials. Leadership skills can be taught, and if practiced diligently can become ingrained to better all facets of their lives. Develop a succession plan by training certain referees and local officials committee members on the steps being taken to assure their advancement.