



## **ePostal National Championships Recommendations**

“Who is going to count for me!?!” “Where am I going to swim my ePostal National Championship!?!” These are common questions related to our ePostal National Championships. During the ongoing pandemic, these questions are heightened as some USMS clubs have been displaced, many facilities require reservations, and safety guidelines have been implemented. We want to give everyone a chance to swim a national championship event safely. If you are planning to swim the event on your own rather than as part of a group with a USMS club, here are a few recommendations as you plan for your swim.

Anyone can be your counter. In the midst of the pandemic, it would be wise to have your counter be someone who is related to you or who you have contact with on a regular basis. This could be a spouse, parent, friend, fellow teammate, or even a lifeguard on the pool deck. Yes, that’s right: coaches, aquatics directors, lifeguards, and even fellow pool patrons can be counters. You just have to explain in advance what you are doing, how they can assist you, and be of help to you.

Once you have identified someone to potentially count for you, what about using a facility? Start reaching out. Start local, with facilities that you practice at and/or utilize to swim on a daily basis. If those don’t exist, reach out via email or phone to a facility in proximity to you that you would feel comfortable traveling to and swimming at in the midst of a pandemic. Contact the facility management and staff at that potential facility. Let them know you are planning to swim a USMS national championship, why you want to do it, and how you swimming this event benefits them. You will be your local pool’s resident celebrity. Think of it this way. Who else might join USMS or swim in championship events because they know you did it? All it takes is one person to do it, to talk about it, and to generate interest.

In preparation for using the facility as a potential venue for a national championship event, it is necessary to identify the public health orders and requirements currently in place regarding swimming in your area. Not only do you need to identify state, county, and local requirements, you also need to identify the COVID-19 safety protocols in place at that specific facility, especially as they relate to use of lap swimming lanes and/or facility rental. Once you have identified these issues, you can then contact the aquatics director and/or facility director at that facility to explain the ePostal requirements and be granted permission to swim that event in that place.

Explain the details of your swim to the lifeguards and facility manager so the staff can help you as needed. Tell them what event you are participating in, the rules and conduct surrounding your swim, how long it will approximately take you, and how to manage entry and exit of other swimmers into surrounding lanes, and other programs that might be taking place around you as you do your swim. For example, provide instructions if a lifeguard is counting for you and have them check if there will also be adequate staffing and coverage for the facility while you complete your swim.

Communication is key to getting approval from the facility where you plan to swim your ePostal National Championship. Here are some questions to consider:

1. If your counter isn't a staff member, do they also need to reserve a lap swim lane? This person would not swim, but would be on deck physically distanced with a face covering and would have to follow all safety protocols at check in as the swimmer would. This would meet the capacity limits for the facility and offer revenue for the unused lane. For example, in a facility that allows ten swimmers across eight lanes, can there be two counters, two swimmers participating in an event, and six other lap swimmers. The answer to this should be yes, but the facility reserves the right to give that concrete answer. Again, clear explanation regarding the event will make it more likely that the facility approves.
2. If the facility typically offers sessions that are shorter than the time needed to complete your swim, can the swimmer and the counter reserve a double session with permission to be in the water for the full time needed to complete the swim? This would be utilized at a facility that has a break time between sessions used for enhanced sanitization protocols.
3. Can the swimmer be assigned to a specific lane to reduce any interference with other lap swimmers?
4. Could a lane be rented for two hours so that the swimmer and counter could switch roles and both have an opportunity to complete the USMS 1-Hour ePostal National Championship (or longer as needed for the other distances)?

If your team is planning the event as a group and has already identified a facility to swim at, please reach out to other Masters swimmers in your area who might not necessarily swim for your team to give the opportunity for those swimmers to take part in the event as well. If you are an individual swimmer, consider offering the suggestion to your facility that the facility can potentially use the event as a way to generate revenue and encourage adults to swim. We understand that every Masters swimmer has a unique experience in terms of where they are swimming, and if they are swimming collectively or individually on a daily basis, and we hope that our suggestions speak inclusively to all swimmers. We want to give everyone the opportunity to swim national championship events.