



USA Karate

American Development Model

Parent Engagement Guide

**A Long-Term Athlete Development Plan
For the Sport of Karate**

USA Karate Sports Performance
Coach Chris Stratis, Head Coach for Sports Performance



USA Karate American Development Model (ADM)

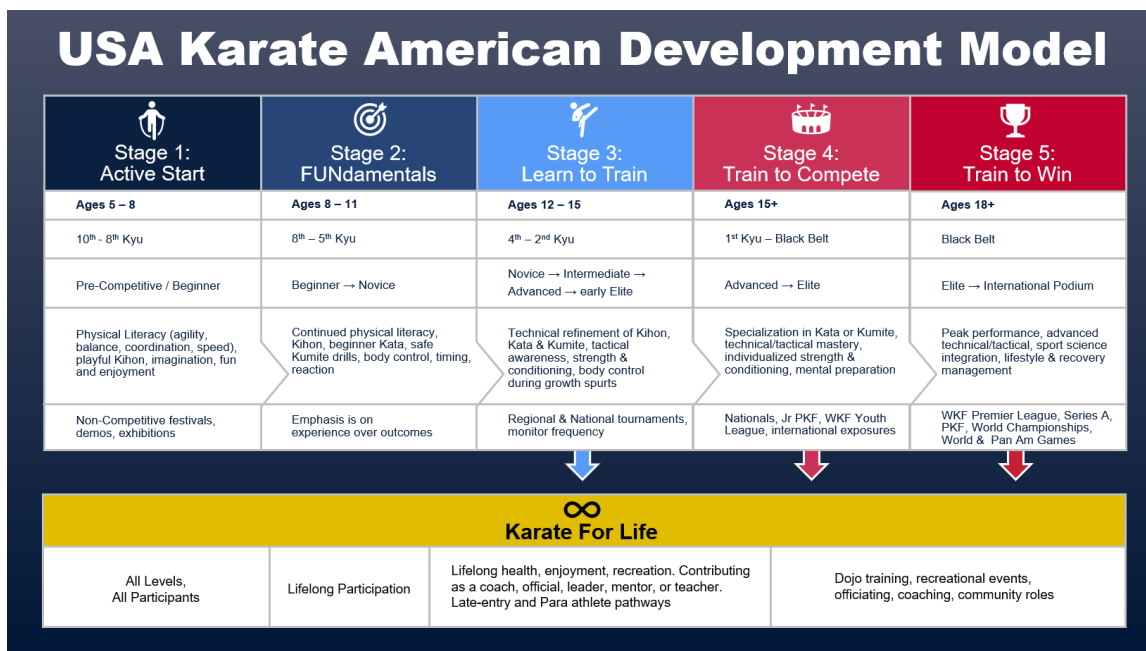
Parent Engagement Guide

Introduction

Parents play a vital role in their child's Karate journey. From the first time they step into the dojo to the day they may compete on the international stage or continue training for lifelong health and enjoyment, your support is essential. This guide outlines how you can encourage, guide, and inspire your child at every step of the USA Karate American Development Model (ADM).

The ADM emphasizes long-term athlete development. It is designed to ensure children grow at the right pace and in the right way, while avoiding burnout, over-specialization, or unnecessary pressure. With your partnership, Karate can remain a positive, empowering part of your child's life.

In addition to promoting long, healthy, and enjoyable careers in Karate, the ADM also provides the most effective pathway for athletes who aspire to achieve peak performance at the senior level. For those seeking to compete at the pinnacle of the sport, the ADM supports the pursuit of excellence and the ultimate goal of Team USA dominance on the world stage.





Key Principles for Parents

Effort Over Outcome

Celebrate hard work, focus, and improvement rather than only wins or medals. Ask, "What did you learn?" instead of "Did you win?"

Balance and Variety

Encourage your child to enjoy other sports, free play, and rest. A broad base of activities builds stronger athletes and healthier kids.

Trust the Process

Each stage of development has a purpose. Skipping ahead for short-term results can limit long-term progress and enjoyment.

Positive Support

Reinforce dojo etiquette, sportsmanship, and respect. Model positive behavior in the stands and at home. After competitions, keep feedback simple and encouraging with phrases like, *"I love watching you compete,"* rather than focusing on mistakes.

Enjoyment First

If children enjoy Karate, they are more likely to stay engaged and improve over time. Fun and friendships are as important as training and competition.

Support Appropriate Competition Volume

Trust coaches to guide competition schedules that balance experience with growth. Competing constantly robs athletes of the time needed to truly grow and develop the skills required for future success. Competition experience is important, but it should serve as a way to measure the results of the time and effort invested in training and development.



Your Role at Each Stage

Stage 1: Active Start (Ages 5 – 8)

- Encourage play, imagination, and fun.
- Support consistent attendance at classes.
- Reinforce respect and listening at home.

Stage 2: FUNdamentals (Ages 8 – 11)

- Help children build practice habits.
- Encourage simple goal-setting and celebrate progress.
- Emphasize effort and learning at competitions.

Stage 3: Learn to Train (Ages 12 – 15)

- Balance Karate with academics and social life.
- Encourage healthy habits like sleep, nutrition, and recovery.
- Allow more independence in training decisions while guiding with care.

Stage 4: Train to Compete (Ages 15+)

- Support your child's choice to specialize in Kata or Kumite.
- Trust coaches and national staff to provide guidance.
- Keep perspective by recognizing that wins and losses are part of growth.

Stage 5: Train to Win (Ages 18+)

- Support travel, recovery, and logistics.
- Encourage independence in training, decision making, and lifestyle.
- Reinforce long-term health and preparation for life beyond competition.

Karate for Life (All Ages)

- Value Karate as a lifelong journey.
- Encourage engagement as a student, coach, official, dojo leader, mentor or recreational participant.
- Recognize that Karate is about more than competition, it is about discipline, growth, health and community.



Tips for Competition Days

- **Before competition:** Keep stress low and encourage your child to focus on effort and learning. A simple, “Have fun and do your best” helps set the right tone.
- **During competition:** Cheer positively, avoid sideline coaching, and show respect for officials, coaches, and opponents.
- **After competition:** Use encouraging language such as, “*I love watching you compete*” or “*I was proud of your effort.*” Avoid listing mistakes, and instead ask reflective questions like, “What went well?” or “What did you learn?”

Final Thoughts

Karate is more than a sport. It is a path of discipline, respect, and lifelong growth. As a parent, your role is not to manage every detail but to create the environment where your child feels supported, confident, and motivated to keep going. By focusing on effort, balance, and enjoyment, you give your child the best chance to thrive not only as an athlete but also as a person.

For many athletes, the ultimate reward is a lifelong connection to Karate as a source of health, community, and personal growth. For others who aspire to compete at the highest level, the ADM provides the most effective pathway toward peak performance and the opportunity to represent Team USA with pride. Both journeys are valuable, and both strengthen the future of Karate.