

Athletes with Disabilities (AWD) Committee Report

2025-2026

Committee Purpose:

The AWD Committee works to expand participation, improve competitive opportunities, strengthen education, and promote inclusion for athletes with disabilities while supporting USA Artistic Swimming's mission to provide opportunities for all athletes to participate and excel in artistic swimming.

2025–2026 Season Review

The USA Artistic Swimming Athletes with Disabilities (AWD) Committee continued to make meaningful progress during the 2025–2026 season in expanding opportunities, increasing visibility, and strengthening the future of adaptive artistic swimming throughout the United States and internationally.

Coaches College Presentation and Training

One of the major accomplishments this season was the inclusion of AWD programming at Coaches College. For the first time, the committee provided a presentation and training session focused on adaptive artistic swimming. This was an important step toward educating coaches, increasing awareness, and providing clubs with the tools needed to successfully develop and support AWD athletes.

International Competition

This season, Team USA participated in the **II World Adaptive Artistic Swimming Clubs Event** held in Mexico City, Mexico. The event included three participating countries: Mexico, France, and the United States.

The United States was proudly represented by two clubs:

- Bay Area Synchro Team
- Miramar Mermaids

Although the event was relatively small, it provided an outstanding international competitive experience for our athletes. Team USA dominated the podium and showcased the strength and talent of our adaptive artistic swimmers. Most importantly, the event demonstrated the continued growth and international interest in adaptive artistic swimming.

Special Olympics Recognition

Discussions regarding the recognition of Artistic Swimming as an official Special Olympics sport remain ongoing. USA Special Olympics continues to await international approval before moving forward with official implementation. The committee remains committed to supporting this effort and will continue to collaborate with all stakeholders to achieve this important milestone.

AWD Invitational at Junior/Senior Nationals

The AWD Invitational held during the Junior/Senior National Championships was smaller than anticipated this year; however, it was extremely successful. The event provided valuable competition opportunities for participating athletes while increasing visibility for the program within the broader artistic swimming community.

Rules and Program Development

During the season, the AWD Committee developed and proposed significant changes to the current rules and structure of the program. These proposed updates include revisions designed to better serve our athletes and provide a more inclusive competitive environment.

Additionally, the committee has proposed a change to the name of the program to better reflect the athletes we serve and the future direction of adaptive artistic swimming. These proposals are currently pending approval.

Priorities for 2026–2027

As we look ahead to the coming season, the committee has identified several key priorities:

Program Growth and Athlete Recruitment

Our primary goal is to increase participation across all clubs by expanding the number of athletes involved in adaptive artistic swimming. We will continue working with city-based special needs programs and organizations to introduce artistic swimming as an activity and competitive opportunity.

The committee is also developing a proposal to facilitate inclusion within various special needs programs and ensure adaptive artistic swimming can become a recognized option within those organizations.

Education and Resources

We aim to expand the resources available through the USA Artistic Swimming website and Coaches Academy. Our long-term vision is for every USA Artistic Swimming club to have access to the tools, training, and support necessary to develop an AWD program.

Special Olympics Recognition

The committee remains committed to finalizing the process for official recognition of Artistic Swimming within Special Olympics and will continue advocating for this important achievement.

Partnership Development

We will continue strengthening relationships with organizations that support athletes with disabilities, including ongoing collaboration with the **United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA)**.

International Development

The committee is actively exploring the creation of an international organization dedicated to artistic swimming for athletes with Down syndrome. This initiative has become increasingly important following the discontinuation of Artistic Swimming within DSISO competitions.

Acknowledgments

The committee would like to express its sincere gratitude to **Monica Velazquez** for her dedication, commitment, and hard work over the past two years. Her contributions have played a significant role in advancing adaptive artistic swimming and creating opportunities for athletes across the country.

We wish her nothing but success and happiness in her next chapter.

At the same time, we are excited to welcome new leadership and look forward to working alongside individuals who share our passion, commitment, and vision for the continued growth of this program.

Together, we remain dedicated to creating opportunities, breaking barriers, and ensuring that every athlete has a place in artistic swimming.

Respectfully submitted,

USA Artistic Swimming AWD Committee
2025–2026 Season