



VORTEX WATER POLO

TRAVEL POLICY

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1.0 Purpose

This document outlines Vortex Water Polo's (VWP) policy on travel for games and tournaments and applies to athletes, coaches, board members, volunteers, chaperones, parents, and spectators. It aims to provide a clear and consistent understanding of travel policy and guidelines and is to be considered a companion document to other relevant VWP Policies (e.g. Financial Policy, Code of Conduct) and the VWP Team Handbook.

The VWP Board of Directors shall review this policy annually.

2.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Every VWP out-of-town tournament will include coaches, chaperones and athletes. Family and friends of athletes may also attend as spectators.

The Rule of Two must be followed at all times. See Section [5.1 Safety & Respect](#) for more information.

2.1 Coaches

Coaches attend out-of-town tournaments as mentors and teachers for the athletes that are participating in the tournament. The expenses for their travel will be covered by the individual athlete fees that are collected for the trip.

Coaches are responsible for the health, safety and well-being of the athletes while at the pool, and as such will be on the pool deck with the team, will work with athletes to complete a pre-game warm-up, will engage in active in-game coaching of athletes, and will conduct post-game discussions regarding game play with the entire team following each game.

Coaches can, if desired, set up a team group chat for the out-of-town tournament, using platforms such as WhatsApp or Telegram. Members will include the coaches, chaperones and athletes attending the tournament.

Coaches will:

- Generate the team rosters.
- Assign cap numbers to the athletes.
- Determine athlete room assignments.
- Create the on-site schedule based on tournament game times¹, which will include:
 - meal times,
 - departure from the hotel times,

¹ Coaches will create and share the on-site schedule as soon as possible, in recognition of chaperone and family member planning needs.

- return to the hotel times,
- team meetings,
- excursions/outings*,
- quiet times,
- lights out.

*Coaches will work with athletes and chaperones to plan any excursions/outings during down time.

Each travelling team will have at least one (1) coach, with two (2) coaches per team being the ideal. A coach can be responsible for more than one (1) team that is travelling to a single out-of-town tournament.

The primary coach for any team must be a minimum of eighteen (18) years of age. All travelling coaches must be up-to-date with all required training and certifications determined by the Manitoba Water Polo Association (MWPA) and/or Water Polo Canada (WPC) prior to departure.

2.2 Chaperones*

Chaperones are required for out-of-town tournaments to ensure the health, safety and well-being of each individual athlete whenever the athletes are not with the coaches. The expenses for chaperone travel will be covered by the individual athlete fees that are collected for the trip.

Chaperones should identify with the same gender as the team, especially if the coach does not. At minimum, either one (1) coach or one (1) chaperone must identify as the dominant gender of the team.

Chaperones are responsible for assisting the coaches throughout the tournament. They will aid and encourage athlete adherence to the on-site schedule. VWP recognizes that, as set out in **Appendix 1: Athlete Expectations**, all athletes are responsible for themselves and their behaviour and chaperones will not be expected to manage poor behaviour.

Chaperones will source and provide healthy meals and snacks for the athletes from the time the team arrives at the hotel at the start of the tournament, until the team departs the hotel for the journey home after the tournament. It is recommended that at least one (1) chaperone in the travelling group has the Food Handlers Certificate.

Coaches may be listed as chaperones, however, any team with athletes under the age of eighteen (18) must have one (1) dedicated chaperone who is not a coach. 19U and Open Women's or Men's teams will require one (1) non-coach chaperone if underage athletes are on the roster. Two (2) non-coach chaperones may be beneficial for some travel events.

*See Appendix 2 for more information on Chaperones.

2.3 Athletes*

Athletes attending out-of-town tournaments need to be safe, respectful and responsible, recognizing that each athlete's actions, decisions, and conduct reflect not just upon themselves,

but upon the entire VWP organization (club, teammates, coaches, parents) and the province they are representing.

Athletes need to abide by VWP's Code of Conduct² while travelling to play in out-of-town tournaments.

Coaches are responsible for supervision at the pool. It is an expectation that athletes speak directly to the coach about issues arising at the pool. All other matters of concern should be discussed with the Head Coach or Chaperones.

During travel for an out-of-town tournament, coaches will hold team meetings to discuss, among other things, game play, team strategy, morale, changes to game times and/or travel arrangements. Attendance at these meetings by all athletes on the team is mandatory, unless permission has been given by the coach to miss the meeting.

*See Appendix 1 for Athlete Expectations

2.4 Parents

VWP encourages parents to attend out-of-town tournaments as spectators to support the team since tournaments can be a great bonding experience for everyone in attendance.

Parents who travel to an out-of-town tournament are asked to:

- Allow their children to fully participate in the independence, responsibility, self-advocacy and slight discomfort of the tournament experience.
- Respect the decisions made by the coaches and chaperones, even if there is a differing preference or opinion.
- Discuss any issues pertaining to their athlete with the chaperones and/or coaches.
- Not interact with the athletes on the pool deck.
- Obtain permission from the chaperones to visit any athlete hotel rooms and not visit any athlete rooms without a coach or chaperone present.
- Not take their child away from the team at any time without permission from the chaperones and/or coaches.

Any parents/guardians who work in the medical field and would like to offer their services on an out-of-town tournament are asked to speak to the Head Coach.

² Each athlete will have signed acknowledgement of the Code of Conduct as part of their registration.

3.0 Out-of-town Tournaments

VWP believes that it's athletes should have the opportunity to play in matches against other water polo clubs. Attending out-of-town tournaments can provide these opportunities, requiring travel.

3.1 Selection of Tournaments

At the beginning of each season, the Technical Director (TD) will work with the Head Coaches (HCs) to select out-of-town tournament opportunities for the various VWP teams.

Selection of out-of-town tournaments will be decided for each specific team, with the cost to attend, availability and location of tournaments as factors in the decisions. These selections will be brought to the VWP Board of Directors for discussion and approval before being shared with families.

For the National Championship League (NCL), location and timing of all tournaments are determined by Water Polo Canada (WPC).

3.2 Schedule

3.2.1 Non-NCL out-of-town tournaments

The schedule, including cost estimates, will be shared with each team annually in October.³ Once the schedule has been shared, a Google form will be sent out to affected families, requesting an expression of interest in travelling to the selected out-of-town tournaments. A non-refundable deposit of \$100/tournament selected will be required from each athlete.

Based on responses, the TD and HCs will determine whether VWP will attend the out-of-town tournaments, and advise families accordingly. Deposits will be returned for any tournaments that VWP decides not to attend.

3.2.2 NCL out-of-town tournaments

An estimated cost to participate in the NCL program and travel to NCL out-of-town tournaments will be shared with families annually in April. Athletes who wish to be considered for one of VWP's NCL teams will be required to submit a non-refundable deposit by August, prior to the start of the season.

The TD will share the NCL schedule, including cost estimates to attend each tournament, with affected teams once it has been published by WPC.

³ Additional travel events may be found throughout the year. These opportunities will be communicated to athletes and families as early as possible, along with estimated travel costs.

VWP's HCs may also suggest attendance at out-of-town tournaments outside the NCL program for NCL teams. These will be shared at the same time as the NCL schedule and will include cost estimates for attending. For athletes who sign-up for NCL, participation in all NCL tournaments is mandatory unless approved by the coach.

3.3 Practicing

It is expected that athletes who sign up for a competitive team will attend and participate fully in all weekly practices for that program. The amount of practice time allocated to each program ensures that athletes are in shape to be competitive at the tournaments they will attend.

If circumstances arise that will inhibit this level of commitment, the athlete is required to discuss with the coach and/or Team Manager and receive approval from the Head Coach for the reduced practice time.

3.4 Uniforms

When travelling to an out-of-town tournament, VWP athletes and coaches represent VWP and the province of Manitoba and it is expected that all athletes and coaches will look professional at all times. As such, athletes are required to purchase and wear the VWP uniform⁴ during all VWP tournament activities.

3.5 Playing time

At the beginning of the season (Sept/Oct), coaches will communicate the playing time philosophy for each competition with athletes and parents, ensuring everyone is well informed.

Decisions regarding each athlete's playing time are solely up to the coaches and are based on a variety of factors such as ability, level of competition, position, etc.

3.6 Fees

Costs to attend out-of-town tournaments are not included with club registration fees and, as such, will require additional payment(s) from the athletes that attend.

3.6.1 Budget

When the schedule of selected out-of-town tournaments is shared with families, it will include a budgeted per athlete cost for each trip.

The overall budget shall include anticipated expenses, such as:

- Tournament fees
- Transportation costs

⁴ The VWP uniform consists of a VWP bathing suit, VWP t-shirt and black shorts or black pants.

- Insurance fees⁵ (optional)
- An allotment for athlete meals and snacks
- Hotel costs for athletes, coaches, and chaperones
- Daily per diems for coaches and chaperones

3.6.2 Payment

VWP will share the total owing for each out-of-town tournament before the trip, with payment being due 1 week prior to departure on the trip.

Non-refundable⁶ deposits will be collected at the time of registration for an out-of-town tournament. If VWP decides to cancel a team's attendance at an out-of-town tournament, the deposit will be refunded.

If an athlete fails to make the final payment by the deadline, they will forfeit their deposit and not be permitted to attend the out-of-town tournament unless an alternate payment schedule has been requested and approved by the VWP Board of Directors.

All athletes who commit to attend an out-of-town tournament will be responsible to pay the full fee, regardless of whether they travel with the team.

3.6.3 Post trip Collections/Refunds

When a trip has concluded, all costs associated with travel to an out-of-town tournament will be totalled and split evenly between the athletes that took part in the trip.

If the trip ended up over budget, families will be advised of additional money owing.

If the trip ended up under-budget, refunds will be reflected in the athlete's RAMP account and can be used to reduce future club registration fees or out-of-town tournament fees.

Families can request details on the funds owing or refunded at any time.

⁵ VWP will investigate the cost of insurances such as medical, travel, accident and/or trip cancellation and make recommendations on the purchase of any or all of these insurances as part of each trip budget.

⁶ Partial refunds may be considered in rare circumstances where an athlete has been injured while playing water polo prior to the tournament. A doctor's note is required, and any refund is at the discretion of the VWP Board of Directors.

4.0 Tournament Organizing Committee

A Tournament Organizing Committee (TOC) will be created in advance of each out-of-town tournament with primary responsibilities being that of booking transportation (flights, bus or rental cars) and accommodations for all athletes, coach(es), and chaperones⁷.

TOC members will include the Technical Director, chaperones, team manager and any parents who wish to assist with the duties.

The TOC will make every effort to find efficiencies and keep travel costs to a minimum, while creating bookings that can be changed or cancelled with minimal penalties and take into consideration the minimization of school absences for athletes. The committee will consult with parents to determine preferences and/or concerns regarding travel at the beginning of the process.

The VWP Board of Directors will have the final say on what method of transportation is used for each tournament, reviewing the information researched and provided by the TOC.

The TOC will also ensure that the athlete information form⁸ is completed by all athletes before the team leaves on the trip.

4.1 Transportation

VWP will make all travel arrangements for athletes, chaperones and coaches travelling to out-of-town tournaments.

It is expected that the team travel together, although VWP recognizes that exceptions can occur. Any exceptions will need to be presented to the Board of Directors and will be reviewed and approved, or denied, on a case-by-case basis.

If a family decides that their athlete will not travel to the tournament city with the team, and this arrangement is approved by the board, Vortex water polo, it's coaches and chaperones will not be responsible for that athlete until they meet up with the team, at a location and time that is mutually agreed upon. If the athlete should encounter difficulties during travel, they are to contact their parents for assistance, not any members of the club. The same holds true for the return journey. Once the athlete leaves the team, Vortex water polo is no longer responsible for them.

⁷ Fee-based, optional, out-of-province medical insurance is available from Water Polo Canada. In order to receive out-of-province insurance, teams need to complete the "[Out of Province Medical Insurance Form](#)" and send it to Water Polo Canada with MWPA copied seven (7) days prior to leaving the province.

⁸ The athlete information form will contain parent contact and allergy information for each athlete.

4.2 Accommodations

VWP will make all accommodation bookings for athletes, chaperones and coaches travelling to out-of-town-tournaments.

NCL tournaments have a “stay and play policy” which requires teams to stay at the hotel chosen by Water Polo Canada. Failure to stay at the designated hotel can result in disqualification from the tournament.

For other events, the choice of accommodations will consider the needs of the teams, while ensuring costs are reasonable and economical. Every effort will be made to chose a hotel which includes breakfast.

15U, 17U 19U: Athletes will share rooms with their teammates, with 3-4 athletes in a room and 2 queen-size beds, whenever possible. Doing this promotes and builds team spirit and bonding and allows the athletes to focus on the competition. Athletes will not stay with their parents, unless discussed with, and approval has been received, from the coach.

Athlete room assignments will be made so that athletes share rooms with other athletes of the same gender. For athletes who identify as non-binary, gender fluid or transgender, the coach will ensure all athletes in the room are comfortable with the room assignment.

13U: Out-of-town tournaments are generally limited to/from Brandon and Winnipeg (day trip) and Regina (overnight), where carpooling is generally the mode of transportation. VWP expects that parents/guardians will travel with their child for these tournaments. If an athlete’s parent/guardian is not able to be present, then arrangements should be made for that athlete to carpool with (and share a room with) another athlete and their parent/guardian⁹. Any 13U athletes that attend an out-of-town tournament as a player for a 15U team will stay with their teammates, as noted above.

Chaperones and coaches will also be expected to share rooms with another chaperone or coach of the same gender, 2 in a room with 2 queen sized beds, whenever possible. If a chaperone or coach would like a room to themselves, they will need to pay for the room on their own and will not be reimbursed.

4.3 Pre-trip Briefing

The TOC will host a briefing prior to each out-of-town tournament for all athletes and parents/guardians. Attendance is mandatory for athletes and at least one parent/guardian.

⁹ It is recommended that this parent/guardian be screened with Criminal Record and Vulnerable Sector Checks.

At this meeting, information will be shared regarding:

- The trip itinerary.
- The hotel information.
- The coaches and chaperones that will be travelling with the team(s).
- The Code of Conduct for athletes.
- The expectation that fees are fully paid 1 week prior to departure.

5.0 Additional information related to travel

5.1 Safety & Respect

While attending an out-of-town tournament, it is expected that all VWP athletes will act in a manner so as to keep themselves and their fellow teammates in a safe and respectful environment.

Athletes are expected to be co-operative with, and kind to, all members of the travelling group, including all other athletes, and any of the coaches and chaperones.

It is recommended that public spaces in the hotel, such as the lobby, be used for social gatherings. Hotel rooms are meant to be a safe space where athletes can have quiet time and privacy if they so desire. Visiting in the hotel rooms of other teammates may be permitted by the coaches and chaperones, but should only occur with the express consent of all occupants of the room.

When athletes are under the age of majority, any time a room is visited by anyone other than the assigned occupants, the door should be propped open (unless against hotel policies) so that a coach or chaperone can see inside the room upon walking past.

After curfew, athletes must not leave their room unless there is an emergency. They are not to open their door to anyone but the chaperones or coaches.

The Rule of Two is used to ensure a safe sport environment for all. When following the Rule of Two, all interactions and communications with athletes are in open, observable and justifiable settings, and two (2) responsible adults (coach, parent, chaperone or screened volunteer) are present. VWP recognizes that there may be exceptions in emergency situations.

5.2 Conflict Resolution

All athletes, coaches, chaperones and attending parents are expected to adhere to the Codes of Conduct adopted by each of VWP, MWPA, WPC and of the tournament they are attending.

If an athlete has an issue with another athlete(s), they should speak to a coach or chaperone. Their privacy will be respected to the greatest extent possible.

If there is a breach of the Travel Policy or Code of Conduct, the chaperone, coach, or VWP Board of Directors will determine the appropriate immediate course of action. This could include a range of disciplinary actions, such as benching an athlete or sending the athlete home at their own expense.

The VWP Board of Directors is responsible for imposing longer term consequences such as suspension or expulsion from the club and may be required to provide a report to MWPA and/or WPC.

5.3 Health Issues

VWP recognizes that during out-of-town tournaments, athletes can experience health problems due to inadequate intake of food and/or fluids, or reduced sleep. If an athlete feels unwell, they need to notify a coach or chaperone immediately. The coach or chaperone will keep this information private to the extent possible.

5.3.1 Injuries

Athlete pre-existing injuries must be disclosed prior to departure on an out-of-town tournament trip.

Any athlete with pre-existing injuries will need permission from the Head Coach to attend an out-of-town tournament. Depending on the severity of the injury, permission to travel may be granted, however playing time may be limited. The Head Coach may also require that the athlete have sought professional medical advice before giving permission to attend an out-of-town tournament.

5.3.2 First Aid kit

Whenever VWP travels to out-of-town tournaments, there will be a basic first aid kit on hand. It is recommended that athletes bring any additional first aid items, such as tape, that they require.

5.3.3 Medication

Chaperones are available to assist with storage and distribution of any medications required by an athlete while travelling for an out-of-town tournament. If a family would like a chaperone to store and distribute medication to their athlete, the chaperone is to be contacted prior to the trip and clear directions should be provided.

Chaperones and coaches should not dispense any non-prescription medications (such as Tylenol or Advil) to athletes without first contacting a parent for permission.

5.4 Meals and Snacks

Chaperones will provide healthy meals and snacks for athletes attending out-of-town tournaments from the time the team arrives at the hotel to the time the team leaves the hotel for their journey home. A per athlete budget will be established as part of the trip estimate, and chaperones are asked to do their best to keep food costs within this budgeted amount.

Chaperones are asked to make every effort to accommodate athlete preferences, however this will not always be possible and so if athletes have preferred snacks, they should bring them along on a trip. Athletes should not assume that they will be given the opportunity to go to a store to purchase items.

Athletes are responsible for their own food during travel to and from the departure city to the destination city for an out-of-town tournament. On the journey to a tournament, athletes should pack enough food to last the entire journey. If travelling by bus, there will be bathroom breaks, but no meal stop(s) on the trip to the tournament. For the journey home following a tournament, athletes will be responsible for purchasing all of their own food and so should have access to funds for this purpose. If travelling by bus, the bus will stop somewhere with at least 2 options for athletes to purchase a meal.

Athletes will not be permitted to share food during travel.

Appendix 1: ATHLETE EXPECTATIONS

Athletes represent VWP and the Province of Manitoba during out-of-town tournaments. Each athlete's actions, decisions, and conduct reflects not just upon the athlete themselves, but upon the entire club (club, teammates, coaches, parents). Athletes need to be safe, respectful and responsible while attending out-of-town tournaments.

In addition to the Guidelines below, athletes need to abide by VWP's Code of Conduct, which each member signs at the beginning of the season.

Athlete Guidelines

1. Athletes are to respect the decisions of the coaches and chaperones. They are the adults in charge and they will have the final say regarding activities, allowances, or exceptions.
2. Athletes are expected to be punctual and on time, ready to leave the hotel at the designated time. This also applies to being ready to play at the pool.
3. Athletes will recognize that behaviour that affects the entire team (ie: arriving late for departures or breaking curfew) could result in on-site disciplinary action for the individual(s) involved.
4. Room assignments are what they are and cannot be changed.
5. Team members must let each other sleep and rest. When a coach or chaperone says it is Lights Out, it is Lights Out and time to sleep.
6. Athletes are expected to respect each other's property.
7. Team members are expected to support and build each other up.
8. Athletes should be courteous at all times, offering to help teammates, chaperones and/or coaches if they see a need.
9. Athletes will keep their personal belongings tidy and picked-up in the hotel room, at the tournament, and in vehicles. Athletes are responsible for their own belongings. **Untidy things get lost or left behind.**
10. Athletes are responsible for any charges made to their rooms that have not been approved by the chaperone or coach. Chaperones will inspect rooms upon check out and all athletes assigned to a room will be held jointly liable for any damage or missing items.
11. It is important that all athletes remember that there are other guests at the hotel, and that they must be respectful to their hotel neighbors and hotel staff. Athletes will not run around the property. If you want to do something, ask yourself "Is what I am doing safe, would my coach and chaperone approve of this?" We are guests and we represent the club.
12. Athletes can always call the chaperones' room, no matter the time. Chaperones are there to assist athletes with anything that comes up during the trip, whether an emergency or non-emergency. They can help find a solution.

13. Athletes are not to go places on their own and are requested to ask chaperones if they want to go somewhere (bathroom, hotel room, etc..) and take a buddy with them. If they are going to leave the hotel room, they must inform a chaperone (even if with parents). For safety purposes, the chaperones need to know where the athletes are at all times.
14. Athletes will eat and drink at meal times with their teammates, unless permission to miss was received from the coach or chaperone. There won't be time for separate meals.
15. The team will have free time and activities may be planned during that time. It is expected that all athletes will have a good team attitude, even if the activity wasn't what they voted for/hoped to do.

Appendix 2: CHAPERONES

Chaperones are part of the team of adults that oversee and take care of athletes when travelling to out-of-town tournaments. They are needed to assist the coaches since, while travelling, athletes are often over-tired, more excited and loud with their peer group, may be anxious about playing, and are out of their normal routines.

A good Chaperone will:

- demonstrate and use common sense,
- be organized and conscientious,
- be budget conscious and keep costs low,
- enjoy working with youth and children,
- be adaptable and flexible to changing situations,
- be collaborative and a team-player,
- be able to mobilize people, and
- uphold integrity and trust.

Chaperones must:

- be a minimum of twenty-five (25) years old,
- be registered in good standing with VWP and MWPA,
- have a valid driver's licence,
- be comfortable driving a seven (7) passenger van,
- provide proof of clean Criminal Record, Vulnerable Sector and Child Abuse Registry checks,
- complete the required NCCP courses,
- have a valid credit card with available credit of at least five thousand dollars (\$5,000).

Responsibilities may include, but are not limited to:

1. Ensuring athletes are where they need to be and on time.
2. In the event of injury or illness, transport athletes to the hospital.
3. Being aware of athletes' health or allergy concerns.
4. Ensuring lights-out is adhered to, and that athletes get to sleep in a timely fashion (this may mean repeated room checks).
5. Planning for, and acquiring supplies, to provide group meals and snacks at the venue, at the hotel, and/or out-and-about.
6. Ensuring athletes are eating and drinking throughout the travel event.
7. Working with the coaches to find fun, free, activities during break times.
8. Ensuring athletes are up/ready and have eaten a solid breakfast each morning.
9. Driving athletes to and from all events, if required.
10. Ensuring athletes use the buddy system and that athletes are not left alone at any time.

11. Be available for the athletes when they are not with the coaches.
12. Chaperones are NOT responsible for athlete's possessions, including money and electronic devices.

Chaperone Guidelines & Tips

- Abide by the VWP Code of Conduct signed at the beginning of the season.
- Not consume alcohol or drugs when with the athletes or when on-duty.
- Understand that they will not be able to please everyone 100% of the time. Decisions need to be made and chaperones are advised to make the best decision for the group at the time. Encourage athlete inclusiveness.
- Be on time at the agreed meeting places; always check in with coaches for last minute changes and allow extra time for forgotten/misplaced items or straggling athletes.
- Keep athletes together for the duration of the tournament. Any exception should be approved by the coach.
- Know where the athletes are at all times. Remind the athletes that they are not to go anywhere alone and will be required to buddy up or take a chaperone/coach, depending on the destination. For example, athletes cannot go to the hotel pool without a chaperone in pool area.
- Encourage the athletes to eat and drink. Generally, the excitement of being in a group can make them unaware of their thirst and hunger.
- Check in with the athletes periodically and let them know they can come to you if they need anything.
- If you are ever in doubt ask yourself, "Is what they are doing safe, in their best interest and in the best interest of the team?"
- Make sure the athletes are taking responsibility for their possessions, especially their team gear.
- If an athlete is sick, please alert parents and coaches immediately.
- Make sure to communicate group meals with the coaches since they may want to join in.