

Parent Informational Meetings



What is it?

Parent Informational Meetings are a series of organized, pro-active classes, meetings or open forums hosted by the figure skating club or Learn to Skate USA Program to inform parents about important aspects of skating. It involves more than casual one-on-one chats with parents or waiting until parents approach you with concerns. Instead, it is about communicating up front to equip parents with the information they want to have so educated decisions can be made as their skater(s) progresses through the sport.

Our most common challenges arise from parents feeling unprepared, lacking proper information, or hearing misinformation. By dedicating time to sharing accurate information, we can prevent many of their concerns and encourage parents to approach us directly with more specific questions. This is your time to sell yourself, your programs and the sport of figure skating.

Who is it for?

Parent education meetings should include all parents! Printed invitations or fliers can be available at registration or within new membership welcome packets with wording that expresses a soft-sell approach for all new parents. Once parents have a better understanding of the wealth of information given out during these meetings, participation in the future will be seen as a "must". Even experienced skating parents need to be kept in the loop as their skater's progress and your organization evolves.

Try dividing your meetings into "new" and "returning" tracks to share the most relevant topics. If you struggle with parent attendance, try hosting meetings while the skaters are on the ice or offer an incentive for attending, such as complimentary coffee or a coupon to a local skate shop.

What is the impact?

Examples of the positive impact of parent informational meetings:

- Increase understanding and satisfaction among parents
- Prevent problems by clarifying expectations and roles up front
- Set a standard for open, respectful communication
- Generate volunteers
- Grow your program and increase retention
- Encourages relaxed social interaction among parents so they become friends
- Keeps parents from making serious equipment purchase mistakes
- Parents will understand the learning curve for beginners and ways to support their skater
- Shows rink management the importance of parent/skater/staff interaction – customer service
- If parents believe in your philosophy and the quality of your program, they are more likely to return and recommend skating to peers. Word of mouth is your best form of advertising, and satisfied, well-equipped parents are your best advocates!

Planning your meetings?

Delivery will depend on your audience and resources. Common meeting spots are the arena during lessons or community space such as a library or community room. Consider the following when planning the timing of parent education: Are skaters approaching transition points such as their first test, first competition, entering hockey leagues, entering the speedskating club or entering a Bridge Program? Are new parents entering your program? Have you added opportunities or adjusted policies? Can parent education be held in conjunction with a special event like a competition or community skating gathering?

Sample Parent Informational Meeting Topics:

- Benefits of skating and values learned
- The Learn to Skate USA curriculum
- Program policies & expectations
- Role of a supportive parent
- U.S. Figure Skating, USA Hockey and US Speedskating structure and participation opportunities
- Private lessons and choosing a coach
- Practice time
- Equipment and costumes
- First competition, hockey leagues or speedskating clubs
- Parent resources
- Communication – where to get information - e-newsletters, website, bulletin board
- Open question and answer time

This is not an all inclusive list but it should get you started. Remember, the more time and effort you spend educating parents, the better the chances that you will have the parents on your side from here forward. After all, they are your ultimate customer and will be making all future decisions about their child's participation.

Resources

For more topic ideas, survey your parents to find out what they would like to know, or look through the Skating Parent Survival Guide Volumes 1, 2, and 3. You can also refer to the information on the new Parent tab found at www.LearnToSkateUSA.com.

