



**Special
Olympics**
Illinois



General Orientation
Participant Guide





General Orientation Agenda

Objectives and Competencies

- ☞ Describe Special Olympics mission, philosophy and vision.
- ☞ Briefly describe the history of Special Olympics.
- ☞ Summarize the basic organizational structure of Special Olympics – grassroots to headquarters.
- ☞ Identify eligibility requirements and access into Special Olympics.
- ☞ Describe what opportunities in Special Olympics are available to volunteers.
- ☞ Identify Special Olympics sports and events.
- ☞ Identify how Special Olympics is unique from other sports organizations.
- ☞ Describe Special Olympics rules, ability grouping, honest effort, and divisioning.
- ☞ Describe available Special Olympics program offerings, challenges, and benefits to athletes.
- ☞ List the steps taken if suspect an athlete is being abused or neglected.

I. Introduction - Welcome and Goals of the Orientation

II. Overview of the Organization

- Special Olympics Mission & Philosophy; Vision; Athlete's Oath
- Brief History; Founder Eunice Kennedy Shriver; Athlete Participation
- Structure
- Roles for the Special Olympics Volunteer

III. Special Olympics Participants

- Eligibility to Participate
- An Intellectual Disability
- Participation of Individuals with Special Considerations
- Facts on An intellectual disability

IV. Sports Training and Competition

- Uniqueness from Other Sports Organizations
- Official & Recognized Sports; Competition Opportunities: Athletes of All Abilities; Young Athletes Program
- Sports Rules; Games & Competition Opportunities at All Levels
- Divisioning; Honest Effort
- Criteria for Athlete Advancement to Higher Levels of Competition
- Athlete Leadership Programs (ALPs), Family Action Network (FANs)
- Proven Benefits and Challenges / Opportunities
- Special Olympics Illinois Fact Sheet; Area Map; Coaches Education System

V. Special Olympics Protective Behaviors Training Program

- Preventing Physical Abuse; Preventing Emotional Abuse; Preventing Sexual Abuse
- Responding to Signs/Allegations of Abuse (Legal Issues; Policies/Procedures)
- Volunteer Code of Conduct

Special Olympics General Orientation

Section I: Introduction

- Objectives:**
- ☞ Come to know the participants and each other.
 - ☞ Describe the goals for the orientation.

General Orientation Goals

- Describe global Special Olympics mission and philosophy and vision.
- Describe an intellectual disability/developmental disabilities* as a concept and its environmental expression or characteristics.
- Cite the importance of sports and physical activity.
- Identify Special Olympics current challenges and opportunities.
- Advocate for persons with an intellectual disability / developmental disabilities.
- Become a dedicated, impassioned volunteer.

* In different parts of the world, an intellectual disability is referred to people who have:

- ✓ Mental retardation
- ✓ Developmental disability
- ✓ Mental handicap
- ✓ Mental impairment

Official Logo

- The five figures represent Special Olympics' global presence...reaching and involving people around the world. The down arm position means "downtrodden," remembering a time when many people thought those with intellectual disabilities were not able to make good decisions or try new things. This often describes the lives of athletes before they became involved in Special Olympics. The straight arms means "equal," showing that our athletes are just like everyone else. The raised arms represent "joy," realizing ultimate goals and rising above.

Special Olympics
Illinois



Section II: Overview of the Organization

- Objectives:**
- ☞ Describe Special Olympics mission and philosophy and vision and values.
 - ☞ Briefly describe the history of Special Olympics.
 - ☞ Summarize the basic organizational structure of Special Olympics – from international headquarters through the grassroots.

Special Olympics Inc.

Special Olympics Mission

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for persons eight years of age and older with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.

Special Olympics Philosophy

Special Olympics is founded on the belief that people with learning disabilities can, with proper instruction and encouragement, learn, enjoy, and benefit from participation in individual and team sports. These must be adapted only as necessary to meet the needs of those with mental and physical limitations.

Special Olympics believes that consistent training is indispensable to the development of an individual's sports skills. In addition, competition among those of equal abilities is the most appropriate means of testing these skills, measuring progress, and providing incentives for personal growth.

Special Olympics Vision

The vision of Special Olympics is to help bring Special Olympics athletes into the larger society under conditions whereby they are accepted, respected and given the chance to become useful and productive citizens.

Special Olympics Athlete's Oath

"Let me win; but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

Biography

Eunice Kennedy Shriver ***Founder of Special Olympics***

As Executive Vice President of the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation, and Founder of Special Olympics Incorporated, Eunice Kennedy Shriver continued for over three decades to be a leader in the worldwide effort to improve and enhance the lives of individuals with an intellectual disability.

Born in Brookline, Massachusetts, the fifth of nine children of Joseph P. Kennedy and Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, Eunice Kennedy received a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology from Stanford University, Palo Alto, California.

Following graduation, Mrs. Shriver worked for the U.S. Department of State and held various positions in the field of Social Work. In 1957, Mrs. Shriver took over the direction of the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, created for the benefit of citizens with an intellectual disability. Under her leadership, the Foundation helped achieve significant advances in areas such as medical research and public education. Mrs. Shriver received international recognition for her work including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the United States' highest civilian award.

In 1968, Mrs. Shriver created Special Olympics. She was actively involved in the daily operations of Special Olympics headquarters until her death in August of 2009. Her son, Timothy P. Shriver, serves as the Chairman of the Board of Special Olympics headquarters.

In her opening address to the 4,000 athletes assembled at the opening ceremonies of the 1987 International Summer Special Olympics Games, Mrs. Shriver captured the meaning of Special Olympics when she said:

“You are the stars and the world is watching you. By your presence you send a message to every village, every city, every nation. A message of hope. A message of victory.

The right to play on any playing field? You have earned it.

The right to study in any school? You have earned it.

The right to hold a job? You have earned it.

The right to be anyone's neighbor? You have earned it.”

Special Olympics History

June 1963

Eunice Kennedy Shriver starts a summer day camp for children and adults with an intellectual disability at her home in Maryland, to explore their capabilities in a variety of sports and physical activities.

19-20 July 1968

The First International Special Olympics Games are held in Chicago's Soldier Field where 1,000 individuals with an intellectual disability from 26 states and Canada compete in track and field and swimming.

December 1971

The United States Olympics Committee gives Special Olympics official approval as one of only two organizations authorized to use the name "Olympics," in the United States.

5-11 February 1977

Steamboat Springs, Colorado, hosts the 1st International Special Olympics Winter Games with more than 500 athletes competing in skiing and skating events. CBS, ABC and NBC television networks cover the Games.

February 1988

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) signs a historic agreement with Sargent and Eunice Kennedy Shriver, in which the IOC officially endorses and recognizes Special Olympics.

July 1988

Special Olympics Unified Sports is launched at the annual Special Olympics Conference in Reno, Nevada, and Lake Tahoe, California. Bowling, volleyball and softball are the first sports to be included.

20-27 July 1990

The third European Special Olympics Games are held in Strathclyde, Scotland. Twenty-four thousand athletes from more than 30 countries participate in eight official sports and five demonstration sports.

February 2005

In 2005, the Special Olympics World Winter Games were held in Nagano where the 1998 Winter Olympics and Paralympics were held. It was the 8th Special Olympics World Winter Games. About 2,000 athletes from more than 80 countries participated in the events.

2005

Introduction of Young Athlete Program – In early 2007, Special Olympics created this pilot program to reach out to children with intellectual disabilities ages 2 to 7, and to welcome them and their families to the Special Olympics movement. The program made its global debut in fall 2007 at the Special Olympics World Summer Games in Shanghai, China. Special Olympics Illinois was 1 of 20 pilot sites worldwide to offer the program. In 2006 Illinois hosted their first culminating event and in 2008 39 sites were up and running throughout the state.

July 2006

Special Olympics held its first USA National Games at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. More than 3,000 athletes from all 50 states competed in 12 different sports. In addition, 2,000 coaches and official delegates, 12,000 family members and friends of athletes and 8,000 volunteers were in attendance.

October 2007

The Special Olympics World Summer Games were hosted in Shanghai, China. Special Olympics marks the first time the World Summer Games have been held in Asia and only the second time the event has been hosted outside the United States. About 7,500 athletes, 40,000 volunteers, and 3,500 event officials and thousands of families, spectators and journalists were in attendance.

July 2008

Special Olympics celebrated its 40th anniversary as a true global movement, with almost 3 million athletes in more than 180 countries around the world.

July 2013

In its 45th year Special Olympics has grown to serve 4.2 million athletes in 220 Accredited Programs in 170 countries worldwide.

July 2018

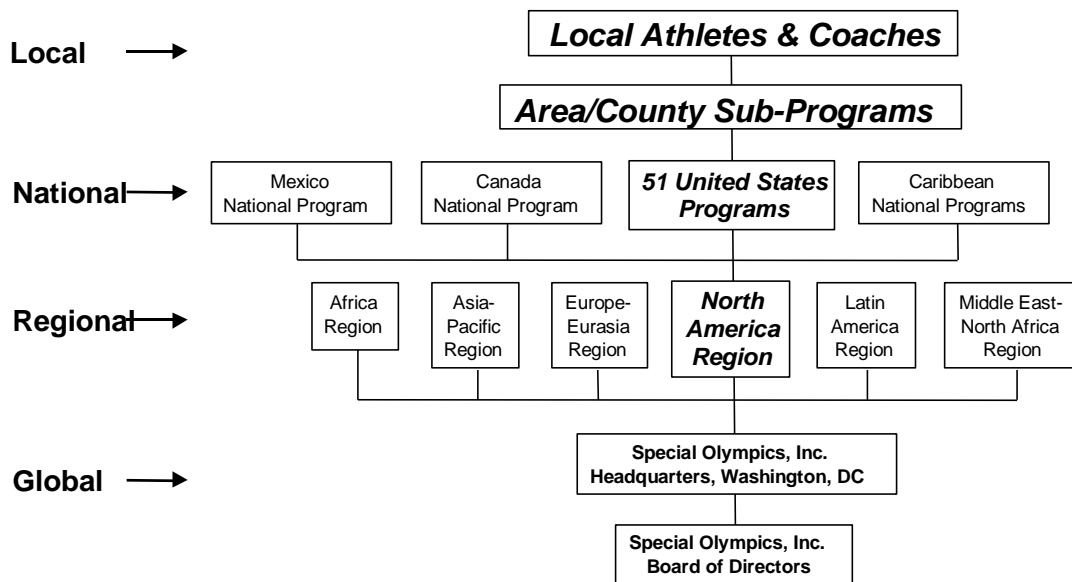
Special Olympics is celebrating its' 50th year with the 2018 USA Games in Seattle, WA, a week of events in Chicago, IL (founding city) and Abu Dahbi (site of the 2019 World Games).

Special Olympics Structure

Special Olympics, Inc. is the world governing body of Special Olympics. Based in Washington, DC, USA, the headquarters is staffed by approximately 100 individuals.

Special Olympics headquarters is responsible for accrediting Programs, worldwide, to conduct Special Olympics activities and programs. Special Olympics headquarters oversees the management of all World and Multi-National Games and coaching education. It also provides support and collaboration in the development of materials, international conferences, and regional train-the-trainer seminars.

Special Olympics Organizational Structure



Roles for the Special Olympics Volunteer

Since Special Olympics is a sports organization, there are many opportunities and roles for a Special Olympics volunteer. For example, employees of a company can come as a team of volunteers with a local Special Olympics program.

According to Points of Light Foundation, "Corporate volunteer programs advance strategic business goals, and, according to executives, significantly increase their company's overall competitiveness in the global marketplace. Successful employee volunteer programs also motivate and provide training/skill building for their employees."



Section III: Special Olympics Participants

Objectives: 👉 Identify eligibility requirements and access into Special Olympics.
 👉 Describe what Special Olympics opportunities are available to volunteers.

Eligible to Participate in Special Olympics

Persons are eligible for Special Olympics competition provided they are:

- at least eight years of age
- have been identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability
- have registered to participate in Special Olympics

Athletes who have physical disabilities but who do not have an intellectual disability are not eligible for Special Olympics.

Condensed from Article 6.01 of the Special Olympics General Rules

Special Olympics training and competition is open to every person who:

1. Has been identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability, **or**
2. Has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures, **or**
3. Has a closely related developmental disability, which means having functional limitations in both general learning and in adaptive skills (such as in recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care).

Persons whose functional limitations are based solely on physical, behavioral, or emotional disability or a specific learning or sensory disability are not eligible to participate as Special Olympics athletes. However, *these individuals may be eligible to be Special Olympics Unified Sports® Partners.*

Participation in Special Olympics training and competition is open to all persons with an intellectual disability, a cognitive delay or a closely related developmental disability who meet the age requirements *regardless of how mild or severe the person's disability, and whether or not that person also has other mental or physical disabilities.*

NOTE: Many Departments of Education no longer report students by level or intensity of service. They recognize 13 categories of disability of which an intellectual disability/developmental disability is one; however, the state is non-categorical in its service delivery system.

- There is *no maximum age limitation for participation* in Special Olympics. The *minimum age requirement for participation in Special Olympics competition is eight years of age (except for those children who participate in Young Athletes Program)*. Children 6-7 years of age may participate in age-appropriate Special Olympics training programs but may not participate in Special Olympics competition or be awarded medals or ribbons associated with competition. Such children may be recognized for their participation through certificates of participation.

All persons who are eligible to participate in Special Olympics training and/or competition programs must register to participate with their local Accredited Program.

An Intellectual Disability*

What is an intellectual disability?

How is an intellectual disability expressed? What are some of the characteristics?

Individuals with a slower rate of learning and a limited capacity to learn (typically scoring lower than 80 on a standardized IQ test) are identified as having an intellectual disability. Generally, they have a cognitive delay of two or more years. They may also walk and talk later, tend to be slightly shorter, and tend to be more susceptible to physical problems and illnesses.

In addition, such individuals may have difficulty managing the ordinary activities of daily living, understanding the behavior of others, and determining their own appropriate social responses. While having the same ranges of social behavior and emotion, they tend to have more frequent inappropriate responses to social and/or emotional situations due to difficulty generalizing information, difficulty in learning from past experiences, not fully comprehending what is expected of them, and lack of exposure to situations.

An intellectual disability is more common than most people think. On average, three percent of the population may have an intellectual disability. However, only 1-2% of the population is actually receiving special services because of having an intellectual disability.

- ◆ Of the population with an intellectual disability, approximately 90% have mild disabilities and 10% have severe disabilities. Those with mild limitations may have a learning rate 40-70% of those without an intellectual disability.
- ◆ Those with severe limitations may lag four or more years behind their peers on physical and motor tests. In addition, they are usually are incapable of traditional schooling. They need to master basic life skills and communication skills.

* In different parts of the world, an intellectual disability is referred to people who have:

- Mental Retardation
- Developmental disability
- Mental handicap
- Mental impairment

Participation of Persons with Down Syndrome and Atlanto-Axial Instability

There is evidence from medical research that up to 10% of individuals with Down syndrome have a malalignment of the cervical vertebrae C-1 and C-2 in the neck. This condition called *atlanto-axial instability* exposes individuals with Down syndrome to the possibility of injury if they participate in activities that hyper-extend or radically flex the neck or upper spine.

Special Olympics headquarters requires temporary restriction of athletes with Down syndrome who have *atlanto-axial instability* from participating in certain activities.

Prohibited activities include: butterfly stroke and diving starts in swimming, diving, pentathlon, high jump, squat lifts, equestrian sports, artistic gymnastics, football (soccer), alpine skiing, and any warm-up exercise placing undue stress on the head and neck.

Athletes with Down syndrome may be able to participate in the above sports if the athlete is examined (including full x-ray views of full extension and flexion of the neck) by a physician. This physician must have been briefed on the nature of the atlanto-axial instability condition and has determined (based on the examination) that the athlete does not have an *atlanto-axial instability* condition.

An athlete with Down syndrome who has been diagnosed by a physician as having an atlanto-axial instability condition may nevertheless participate in the sports identified above if:

- ✓ The athlete (or the parent if the athlete is a minor) confirms in writing his or her decision to proceed with these activities notwithstanding the risks created by the *atlanto-axial instability*;
- ✓ Two licensed medical professionals certify in writing that they have explained these risks to the athlete and his/her parent or guardian and that the athlete's condition does not, in their judgment, preclude the athlete from participating in Special Olympics;
- ✓ The statements and certifications are documented and provided to Accredited Programs using the standardized form approved by Special Olympics headquarters entitled "Special Release for Athletes with *Atlanto-axial Instability*" and any revisions of that form, approved by Special Olympics headquarters ("Special Release Concerning Atlanto-axial Instability").

Participation by Persons who Are Blood-Borne Contagious Infection Carriers

No Accredited Program or Games Organizing Committee may exclude, isolate, or discriminate from participation in any Special Olympics training or competition any athlete who is known to be a carrier of a blood-borne contagious infection or virus.

In view of the risk that one or more Special Olympics athletes may have a blood-borne contagious infection or virus, Accredited Programs and Games Organizing Committees shall follow the "Universal Blood and Body Fluid Precautions" for every exposure to any person's blood, saliva, or other bodily fluid during training and competition.

Facts about Intellectual Disabilities

Incidence

- Over 300 million worldwide
- 7.5 million in the United States

Prevalence

- 7 times more prevalent than deafness
- 9 times more prevalent than cerebral palsy
- 15 times more prevalent than total blindness
- 35 times more prevalent than muscular dystrophy

Classification of Limitations: Environmental Expression and Learning Characteristics

Mild (90%)

- Learn more slowly than peers
- Walk and talk later
- Generally slightly shorter
- More susceptible to illnesses
- More difficulties in appropriate behavior

Severe (10%)

- Usually incapable of traditional schooling
- Need to master life skills and communication skills

Causes of Intellectual Disabilities:

- Over 500 known causes
- Half have more than one causal factor
- Most prevalent known causes are fetal alcohol syndrome and iodine deficiency
- Most prevalent genetic cause is X-linked disorder
- Disorder can be biomedical, social, behavioral or educational

Section IV: Sport Training and Competition

- Objectives:**
- ☞ Identify how Special Olympics is unique from other sports organizations.
 - ☞ Identify Special Olympics sports and events.
 - ☞ Describe Special Olympic rules, ability grouping, honest effort, & divisioning.
 - ☞ Describe available Special Olympics program offerings, challenges, and benefits to athletes.

Uniqueness from Other Sports Organizations

Special Olympics is more similar than different from other sports organizations. However, it is important to identify the five areas that make Special Olympics unique. Per Official Special Olympics General Rules:

1. A variety of sports opportunities are provided for all ability levels.
2. Ability groupings are created through a process called divisioning to provide equitable competition (evenness) for all athletes within each ability grouping (division).
3. Awards are provided to all participants who compete.
4. The established criteria for athlete advancement to higher levels of competition is based on order of finish for each division and random draw.
5. Special Olympics does not charge a fee to athletes (or their families) to train or compete.

Special Olympics Competition Opportunities for Athletes of All Abilities

Special Olympics aims to provide a variety of competition opportunities for athletes of all abilities by offering official events of various degrees of difficulty and challenge.

The lowest ability athletes can participate in specially modified events such as the 25m Assisted Walk (athletics) or the 15m Flotation Race (aquatics). There are also events for athletes who use wheelchairs. The Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) provides participation for individuals with an intellectual disability and disabilities requiring the greatest assistance and support.

In team sports, lower-ability athletes who are not yet ready for team play can participate in Individual Skills Contests. For example, in football (soccer), athletes can earn medals for performing the skills of Dribbling, Shooting, and a Run-and-Kick event. Lower ability athletes may also participate in modified team events such as 5-a-side football (soccer) and Modified Volleyball.

Most Special Olympics events have few differences from the sport played by individuals without disabilities. Higher ability athletes are now participating in events like the marathon, or in Unified Sports® events alongside athletes without disabilities.

Special Olympics Young Athletes Program

Young Athletes is an innovative sports play program for children with intellectual disabilities and their peers, designed to introduce them to the world of sports prior to Special Olympics eligibility at age 8. The Young Athletes Program was created to meet the physical and developmental needs of children ages 2-7. The Program will also offer families the opportunity to share in the success of their future athlete. It will provide an appreciation of fitness and sport for the entire family. Through their preparation for participation in sports, families will see the potential for their child.

Young Athletes introduces children with and without intellectual disabilities and families to the world of Special Olympics by pursuing the following goals:

- Engage children with intellectual disabilities through developmentally appropriate play activities designed to foster physical, cognitive and social development;
- Welcome family members of children with intellectual disabilities to the Special Olympics network of support;
- Raise awareness about the abilities of children with disabilities through inclusive peer participation, demonstrations and other events.

Young Athletes is a versatile program that can work in various learning situations. The program is designed for families to play with their young athletes at home in a fun atmosphere. It is also appropriate for pre-schools, schools and playgroups to use with small groups of young children with and without disabilities. The flexibility of Young Athletes ensures the opportunity to welcome families and their young children in the Special Olympics family.

Sports Rules

All Special Olympics competitions follow the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules. These rules have been adapted from official rules of the National Governing Body or International Federation of each sport. In addition, the Special Olympics Sports Rules Committee approves the rules. After approval, the rules are set forth in the Official Special Olympics Rules books (Summer and Winter). These rules can be found online at the Special Olympics website: <http://www.specialolympics.org/sports.aspx>

Rules are based upon existing governing body and community sports organization rules in order to facilitate athletes' transition into the community or school sports activities.

Special Olympics Illinois Rule Interpretations can be found online at the Special Olympics Illinois website: www.soill.org.

Special Olympics Games and Competitions at All Levels

The Special Olympics Winter and Summer World Games, organized with assistance from Special Olympics, Inc. headquarters, provide an international showcase for Special Olympics athletes of all abilities. USA Games are organized every 4 years to provide summer sports competition to athletes of all abilities within the USA. In addition, Accredited Programs will conduct State Games every year. The true strength of the Special Olympics movement, however, is found at the local level where hundreds of thousands of athletes benefit every week from the challenge of high-quality competition.

Special Olympics Divisioning

Special Olympics organizes its competition so that, whenever possible, athletes compete against others of similar ability. This process is called divisioning.

Athletes or teams are divisioned using the following basic procedure:

1. Divide by Gender: Male, Female or Combined (Under some circumstances)
2. Divide by Age:

Individual Sports	Team Sports
8-11	15 and under
12-15	16-21
16-21	22 and over
22-29	30 and over
30 and over	
3. Divide by Ability:
 - ✓ Pre-competition information and scores are used to place individuals or teams into preliminary divisions.
 - ✓ On-site preliminary events (timed heats or team observations) are conducted to verify or modify divisions for the final competition.
 - ✓ In individual sports, the suggested is that the difference between the best time/score and the worst time/score within a final division should not vary by more than 10-15%.
4. Combining Groups:
 - ✓ Age groups and/or males and females may be combined if this achieves a closer matching of ability.
 - ✓ The desired minimum number of athletes or teams in a division is 3. The maximum is 8.

In many Accredited Programs, the numbers of participants are so low that divisioning becomes a tremendous challenge. In all instances, competition management personnel are charged with providing competition among those of equal abilities. **Thus, ability is the overriding factor as long as there is no health or safety risk to athletes.**

Honest Effort

According to the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules, athletes are to participate honestly and with maximum effort in all preliminary trials and/or finals. The Sports Rules Committee at the competition shall disqualify athletes, who fail to do so from all remaining events.

Criteria for Athlete Advancement to Higher Level Competition

The following describes how athletes can advance to the next level of Special Olympics competition (i.e. from local Games all the way to Special Olympics World Games).

1. Athletes must have completed the minimum training requirements (including 10 hours within two months prior to a culminating competition) and competition experiences with a certified Special Olympics coach.
2. Training and competition experience must be in the same sport in which the athlete will be competing.
3. If quotas are limited, priority is given to first place finishers from all divisions of the sport/event based on eligibility requirements. If the number of first place finishers exceeds the quota, athletes are selected to advance by random draw.
4. If there are not enough first place finishers to meet the quota, all first place finishers advance. The remainder of the quota shall be met by random draw of the second place finishers. If the quota has still not been met, the process is repeated, adding each place of finish as necessary, until the quota is met.
5. An athlete shall not be barred from advancement due to prior competition experience. For example, an athlete shall not be prohibited from advancing to World Games solely on the basis that he or she competed in previous World Games.
6. Accredited Programs may establish additional criteria for advancement to higher-level competition based on behavior, medical, or judicial considerations. They may deviate from these advancement procedures due to the size or nature of their Programs. Requests to deviate from the established procedures must be submitted in writing as follows:
 - For advancement to Multi-National and World Games, Special Olympics headquarters will consider and approve or disapprove all requests.
 - For advancement to competitions up to the National or Accredited Program level, the Accredited Program will consider and approve or disapprove all requests.

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS (ALPs)

Athlete Leadership Programs (ALPs) grew from the realization that Special Olympics athletes possess leadership potential that, if cultivated, will serve them in more inclusive community settings and as future leaders of an athlete-centered Special Olympics movement. Many athletes whose lives have been deeply touched by their involvement in Special Olympics are eager to lead as role models, spokespersons, volunteers, coaches, fund-raisers, and officials. ALPs training is designed to provide the tools and resources necessary as athletes embrace these new leadership roles within Special Olympics and by extension in the communities in which they live.

There are a variety of leadership opportunities with the ALPs programs designed to allow athletes a variety of involvement opportunities including:

- Chapter Board of Directors member
- Local/Area Committee member
- Games management or evaluation team members
- Global Messenger
- Input Council member
- Coaches or officials
- Volunteers
- Donors

Having athletes contribute to the leadership of Special Olympics through these roles ensures that our Programs continue to meet athlete needs and interests.

FAMILY ACTION NETWORK (FANs)

Special Olympics Illinois has expanded its communication with its families and has developed a Statewide Families Committee and Family Action Network (FANs) to continue developing resources and opportunities for Special Olympics families in Illinois. The mission of FANs is to promote the goals of Special Olympics Illinois by celebrating families and engaging family involvement through support, mentoring and providing resources for families of children and adults with intellectual disabilities

Special Olympics Illinois knows that families play a critical role in the continued success and growth of Special Olympics Illinois. Families are volunteers, coaches, fundraisers, speakers, but most importantly, they are a constant source of support and encouragement for their athlete.

The Special Olympics Illinois Family Action Network (FANs):

- Provides information to families on news, events and opportunities with Special Olympics
- Honors families as integral members of the Special Olympics community
- Recognizes family contributions at all levels of the movement
- Helps families become advocates for the Special Olympics movement— Family Messengers
- Provides a forum for families to share ideas, issues and common interests with other families
- Provides opportunities for families to volunteer in their athlete's trainings and competitions
- Encourages new families who can benefit from Special Olympics to join

Proven Benefits of Special Olympics

Special Olympics athletes are like athletes everywhere...they enjoy the social experiences that come with training and competition. They too, "are motivated to participate by love of sports and by the competition Special Olympics provides...Special Olympics athletes are not looking for sympathy or special treatment. They are serious about their sports, as demonstrated by their oath. They have a love of sport and training, and appreciate developing personal skills...however...the greatest rewards...are from the enjoyment of sports, the social opportunities provided and the chance to make friends on and off the field. The rationales for participation for Special Olympics athletes are consistent with those of other athletes at various levels and in various programs. They include the pursuit of physical fitness as a lifestyle choice."

The benefits of participation in Special Olympics have been proven to be substantial. The overwhelming consensus among athletes, coaches and family members is that there is significant improvement in athletes' sense of self, social skills and social interactions due to their participation in Special Olympics. They noted improvement in self-confidence and self-esteem as well as in overall physical health status. As a lifelong availability, Special Olympics has brought positive experiences to individuals who otherwise might not have been given these same opportunities. (Cited from: "*Changing Lives through Sport – A Report Card on the Impact of Special Olympics*".)

To review the entire article cited above, and other studies on the impact of Special Olympics, please see the following links:

- The Positive Contributions of Special Olympics to the Family (http://www.specialolympics.org/research_impact_families.aspx)
- A Comprehensive National Study of Special Olympics Programs in the United States (http://www.specialolympics.org/research_impact_usa.aspx)
- Health Promotion Pilot Programs Evaluation: Improving Athletes' Health (<http://info.specialolympics.org/Special+Olympics+Public+Website/English/Initiatives/Research/Impact/Health+Promotion+Evaluation.htm>)
- National Evaluation of the Special Olympics Unified Sports Program (<http://info.specialolympics.org/Special+Olympics+Public+Website/English/Initiatives/Research/Impact/Unified+Sports+Evaluation.htm>)

Other studies have cited additional benefits for Special Olympics athletes:

- *A richer, more rewarding lifestyle
- *Improved skills and confidence that apply to school, work, home and social life, and
- *Leadership opportunities

These are the reasons why Special Olympics puts so much emphasis on *consistent training, fair competition and the importance of the coach.*

In addition, Special Olympics enhances school and community involvement. Such involvement includes:

- Interaction with others through a common interest in sports
- Development of lifetime sports and skills
- Participation in community-based facilities
- Information and awareness through public education
- Media exposure
- Opportunities to be involved in leadership roles such as speakers, coaches, competition management personnel, Board Members, etc. (Athlete Leadership Programs)
- Development of Partners Clubs® - peer coaches
- Development of Unified Sports® - peer teammates

Challenges and Opportunities for Special Olympics

2013 was the 45th Anniversary of the Special Olympics Movement. The organization has more than four and a half decades of remarkable successes behind it but still has many challenges ahead.

Future goals for the Special Olympics program worldwide include the following:

1. Strengthen Special Olympics at the local and national levels, both programmatically and financially.
2. Expand the number of athletes participating in the program at all levels.
3. Develop the quality of sports expertise involved in the management of Special Olympics at all levels.
4. Enhance the quality of coaching education by improving materials and training programs.
5. Offer additional training opportunities for athletes through camps, home training programs, Partners Clubs® and other training initiatives.
6. Enhance the quality of competitions within an Accredited Program, particularly at the local level.
7. Expand Special Olympics Unified Sports® participation and competitive opportunities.
8. Expand the Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) to bring Special Olympics opportunities to more athletes with the severest disabilities.
9. Explore the possibilities for additional competition opportunities above the national level.
10. Continue the active participation of Special Olympics Accredited Programs in the growth and development of the worldwide family of Special Olympics.
11. Expand the number of trained volunteers at the local level and the number of family members supporting their athlete.
12. Develop and expand Young Athletes Program participation and opportunities.
13. Develop and expand the Athlete Leadership Program.
14. Develop and expand the Families Program.

Section V: Special Olympics Illinois



Fact Sheet

- Head quartered in Bloomington-Normal with regional offices in Highland and Lombard
- An Illinois 501(c) (3) nonprofit corporation with a volunteer Board of Directors
- Special Olympics Illinois is not funded by United Way or the Joseph P Kennedy, Jr. Foundation
- Governs all Special Olympics activities in Illinois
- 22,500 + athletes
- 45,000 + volunteers (Coaches, Chaperones, Day of Event Staff, Clinicians, Area Training Directors)
- 290 competitions each year
- 80+ paid staff
- Organizes approximately 200 competitions annually, including 25 Area Qualifiers, 43 District, 5 Sectional and 7 State Tournaments including State Summer and Winter Games
- **New in 2018, divided into 11 geographical “Regions” each managed by a Region Director(s) and a Volunteer Committee or Events Committees
- Provides training free of charge for all coaches and athletes
- Over 50 Young Athletes programs exist throughout the state with more than 20,000 athletes
- 17 Sanctioned Sports:

Alpine Skiing

Aquatics

Athletics (Track and Field)

Basketball (Team, Ind. Skills & Intermediate Skills)

Bocce (Traditional & Unified)

Bowling

Equestrian Sports

Flag Football

Floor Hockey

Golf (Ind. Skills, Traditional & Unified)

Gymnastics (Artistic and Rhythmic)

Powerlifting

Snowshoeing

Soccer (Team, Ind. Skills & Unified)

Softball (Team & Ind. Skills)

Tennis (Ind. Skills & Unified)

Volleyball (Team, Ind. Skills & Unified)

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Coaches Education System

The Coaches Education system was developed by Special Olympics Inc. to improve the training experience for Special Olympics coaches. Through coaching education and certification, coaches are able to enhance their skills while helping athletes reach their sport potential. The Coaches Education System is also a means of tracking certification and rewarding those who continue their sport education.

Coaches Education System in Illinois

The Coaches Education System allows coaches to be certified at four levels in the system. A coach has the option of staying at a particular level or move higher within the system. In each level there are requirements that must be met in order to be certified. Individuals must complete the requirements of a level before they can be certified at the next level. Certification is determined by sport. A coach can be certified at Level I in Basketball and at Level III in Volleyball if they have completed all of the requirements. In order to maintain a level of certification coaches must re-certify within four years.

The system was designed with options for individuals without sport experience (Circuit I) and with sport experience (Circuit II). Depending on the coaching background, a training program is available to fit an individual's coaching needs. Coaches may take courses from any level of the system at any time based on need and availability.

Circuit I

This program is for individuals with Special Olympics experience but minimal sport experience. These courses focus primarily on sports skills and coaching instruction.

Circuit II

This program is for individuals who come into Special Olympics with an extensive sport background but little experience with Special Olympics athletes. These courses provide valuable information regarding Special Olympics philosophy, procedures, rules and the behavioral and medical situations that are more common with Special Olympics athletes. Individuals who would be considered for this Circuit are as follows:

- IHSA Certified Coach

- IESA Certified Coach

- ASEP Certification

- 2 years of coaching experience with AAU, Little League or other sport organization

A certificate or card from the Governing Body who granted the certification must be supplied to your Regional Manager of Sports Training to receive credit.

Basic Education Courses

- **General Orientation** – This course is designed to provide basic information concerning Special Olympics as a whole. Specific information covered is history, mission, philosophy, organizational structure, policies and procedures, sports and programs offered and future trends in Special Olympics. This course is a prerequisite for other courses and is required for certification. Available online: <https://www.soill.org/general-orientation/>
- **Skills Course** – Courses are designed to provide basic information regarding techniques and instructional methods for teaching basic sports skills, organizing training sessions and competition experience. These courses are sport specific and include a classroom session as well as an activity session with athletes.
- **Principles of Coaching** – This course is designed to provide valuable information regarding coaching in Special Olympics. Specific information covered is coaching philosophy, developing a coaching staff, designing training sessions, administrative and management skills, sports safety and risk management. This course is not sport specific and includes a classroom session with multiple interactive components.
- **Tactics Course** – Courses are designed to provide information on sports specific strategies and tactics. Specific information covered is creating drills, competition preparation, competition strategies, bench coaching and preparing athletes as leaders. These courses are sport specific and include a classroom session and an optional activity session with athletes.
- **Comprehensive Mentoring** – Courses are designed to match a newly active Special Olympics coach with a certified veteran Special Olympics coach or university or interscholastic coach outside of Special Olympics. The veteran coach provides one on one support to the new coach sharing ideas and experiences that will facilitate their introduction into the Special Olympics program. Mentors must meet basic Special Olympic requirements to participate in the program.
- **Mentoring Training** – Courses provide individuals interested in becoming mentors with information regarding the Comprehensive Mentoring program as well as strategies and expectations for their participation.
- **Clinician Training** - The Clinician Training program is for veteran Special Olympics coaches or National Governing Body coaches who have an interest in becoming clinicians for Special Olympics training schools. Information will be given on strategies for making effective presentations, Special Olympics training schools formats and general Special Olympics training requirements. This course is not sport specific. All participants must be experienced coaches in their sport of choice and may be screened for applicability.
- **Unified Sports** - The Unified Sports course provides an introduction to the Special Olympics Unified Sports program. Unified Sports pairs Special Olympics athletes with non-disabled peers for doubles or team competition in Special Olympics sports. Information regarding the formation of Unified Sports teams is covered including selection and recruitment of athletes and partners, appropriate sports and team composition, rules regarding Unified Sports participation and the principle of meaningful involvement. This course is not sport specific. This training is mandatory for participation in Unified Team Sports (Basketball, Soccer, Volleyball).

Continuing Education Courses

These courses are designed for those individuals who need to re-certify but have chosen to remain at the same level. They include Officials Training, Sports Medicine Training and Sport Refresher Courses.

- **Officials Training** – Courses are designed for individuals who wish to become officials or referees for Special Olympics Illinois competitions. The course contains a 3 hour classroom session as well as a 3 hour event experience session.
- **Sports Medicine** – Courses are designed to provide Special Olympics coaches with information concerning injury prevention, injury recognition and basic treatment, conditioning, flexibility, nutrition and emergency procedures.
- **Sport Refresher Courses** – Courses that are sport specific and will cover new rules, innovations in technology or equipment, strategies and medical concerns related to the sport. A coach must take a Refresher Course in each of the sports in which they are certified to maintain that sport certification. Clinics or courses offered by a National Governing Body would also count toward renewal of certification. The NGB Course Verification Form must be submitted to your Regional Training Manager to receive credit.

Certification in Illinois

Certification is not mandatory in Illinois, **but it is strongly recommended for the following reasons:**

- To promote the mission of Special Olympics
- To provide athletes with the safest and most effective training sessions possible
- To enhance coaching skills
- To keep up to date regarding current rules and training techniques
- To demonstrate program credibility
- To provide protection from liability issues

The certification process begins with a General Orientation. To be certified, a coach must attend a General Orientation. The General Orientation is valid for life and does not have to be repeated or updated. A basic skills course in a particular sport must then be completed to attain basic certification. Below is the procedure for obtaining a coaches certification in any given sport:

1. Attend a Certified Training School.
2. Sign the registration sheet at the Certified Training School.
3. Obtain an *Application for Special Olympics Sports Training Certification* Form at the Certified Training School.
4. Attend a General Orientation. (one time only requirement) **You cannot be certified without a General Orientation, Class A and Protective Behaviors.**
5. As of May 30, 2014 practicum hours are no longer required to complete the *Application for Special Olympics Sports Training Certification*.
 - a. SOILL still recommends a minimum of 10 hours of practicum utilizing skills and techniques learned from Certified Training School.
6. Fill out Certification Application form in its entirety. Place Area number in upper right hand corner of the form. Sign on applicant line.
7. Regional Manager of Sports Training will collect and forward to Normal office.

Once the form reaches the State Office in Normal, IL it will be processed. Coaches will be sent a confirmation letter and a certificate. Certifications are valid for four years from the training date. A copy of the application is then sent on to the Special Olympics Incorporated office in Washington D.C. For any questions regarding this process please contact your Regional Sports Director/Manager.

Welcome to the Special Olympics Training Program for Protective Behaviors



Thank you for being a part of the Special Olympics family. It is through the caring, concern and talents of all our athletes, families and volunteers that Special Olympics has become one of the most respected sports programs in the world. Your participation in the Protective Behaviors Program is just one more way that you demonstrate your dedication. The main objective of this presentation is the prevention of sexual abuse of Special Olympics athletes. It will also briefly address physical and emotional abuse.

Actions Special Olympics has Taken to Protect Athletes

- This protective behavior training
- Volunteer screening requirements in the US
- Codes of conduct for athletes and coaches
- Policy prohibiting volunteers or staff in authority positions from dating athletes

Special Olympics US Volunteer Screen Policy

- The foremost goal of the volunteer screening policy is to protect the safety and well-being of athletes
- Special Olympics screens prospective Class A volunteers
- Class A volunteers are re-screened every three years
- If screening reveals criminal history involving certain offenses, the volunteer is prohibited from participation

Who is a Class A Volunteer?

Definition

- Volunteers who have regular, close, physical contact with athletes
- Volunteers in a position of authority or supervision with athletes
- Volunteers in a position of trust of athletes
- Volunteers who handle substantial amounts of cash or other assets of the Program

Examples:

- Coaches, Unified Partners, chaperones, overnight hosts, ALPs mentors, drivers of athletes
- May also include Fundraising Event Committee members, board members, and Games Management team members

Benefits and Limitations of the Volunteer Screening Policy

- Volunteer screening is a tool Special Olympics uses to help protect, but it is not fool-proof
- Many predators do not have criminal records
- Your job as a volunteer is to be vigilant and report any behavior or activity that does not appear appropriate based on
 - Your personal experience or
 - Warning signs identified in this presentation

Codes of Conduct

Codes of Conduct are in effect and enforced for athletes, coaches and volunteers.

- All Special Olympics Programs are required to have a code of conduct for athletes and coaches. The codes below list the minimum standards set by Special Olympics. Please check with your local Special Olympics Program to see if there is a more restrictive code for that Program.

Athlete Code of Conduct

Coach Code of Conduct

Volunteer Code of Conduct

- Each Program is responsible for establishing guidelines for sanctions related to breach of these codes of conduct
- Included in the codes are references to the prohibition of volunteers or staff in authority positions dating athletes

Recognizing Sexual Predators

A sexual predator could be anyone. There is no “look” or behavior pattern that sets them apart. Sexual Predators:

- Target vulnerable populations (such as children and individuals with intellectual disabilities)
- Come from all backgrounds
- Can be male or female
- Are generally very likeable and have warm personalities
- May have limited relationships with other adults

Remind athletes and families that not everyone who comes to a Special Olympics event is a volunteer who has been screened and is assumed to be “safe”

Sexual Abuse

- For athletes requiring assistance with changing, toileting or showering, it is a best practice if two volunteers are present
- Private conversations with athletes should be within sight of others who are aware of the conversation
- Hugs should respect both athlete and volunteer limits and never be secretive
- Touching should avoid areas a traditional swimsuit would cover
- Be aware of unusual or inappropriate gifts, trips, affection or attention from a volunteer
- Be aware of relationships between volunteers and athletes that become private or secretive
- Be clear and direct about pointing out inappropriate behavior

Inappropriate Behavior

Inappropriate gifts, trips, outings, or other gestures of affection from a volunteer include:

- Invitations for sleepovers at a volunteer’s house
- Invitations to parties at a volunteer’s house where parents or care providers are not included
- Excessive displays of interest in a particular athlete or group of athletes (such as all male athletes or only athletes under the age of 13)

Tips for Travel

- Be sure to separate sleeping rooms by gender
- Try to assign roommates based on similar age, maturity and size
- Establish a plan for checking on each room/athlete
- Clearly explain rules and behavior expectations of both chaperones and athletes before each trip

Emotional Abuse

- Profanity is never allowed
- Treat athletes with respect and provide encouragement
- Do not allow demeaning nicknames even among teammates
- Discipline should be part of a meaningful behavior modification strategy and never acted on in anger

Physical Abuse

- Corporal punishment is never allowed no matter who says it is OK
- Withholding food or water is maltreatment and strictly prohibited
- Only give prescribed medications in accordance with state regulations (consult your Special Olympics Program office for those regulations)
- Be aware of athlete sensitivity to temperature, sound and touch

How to Recognize Abuse

- Changes in behavior may offer the only visible clue that an athlete is the victim of abuse. Abuse causes stress and victims often exhibit stress related behaviors:
 - Depression
 - Withdrawal (including loss of interest in participation in Special Olympics)
 - Thoughts of or attempts at suicide
 - Aggression
 - Immature acts
 - Sleep disturbances
- Uncharacteristic changes in behavior that last for more than a few days indicate a possible need for intervention, but are not a certain indicator of abuse as there are other causes of stress. The absence of behavioral indicators does not indicate lack of abuse.
- Statements by the athlete concerning inappropriate touching or physical harm
- Physical indicators of abuse:
 - Questionable injuries such as bruises or lacerations in the soft tissue areas of an athlete's body. Bruises can change color during the healing process and bruises of different colors indicate different stages of healing, thereby indicating that the injuries happened on more than one occasion.
 - Injuries in genital areas may indicate sexual abuse; for example, cigarette burns on the inside of the upper leg or on the buttocks.
 - Tether marks or rope burns and abrasions caused by tying wrists, ankles or the neck are also indicators of probable abuse.
- Some athletes are prone to injuries as a consequence of athletic competition. The location of the injury may indicate whether the injury was due to abuse or competition. Injuries that happen due to athletic competition are most likely to be on the shins, knees, elbows, etc. They are less likely to be on the abdomen, across the back, on the back of the legs, or on facial cheeks.
- Possible signs of neglect include:
 - Unattended medical needs
 - Inappropriate clothing for the climate and weather conditions
 - Chronic hunger and poor personal hygiene

Reporting Suspicious Activity

- Suspicious activity should be reported to Special Olympics staff
- Reports will be reviewed and reported as appropriate
- Suspensions may be utilized during investigations
- Special Olympics reserves the right to expel athletes or volunteers as a result of suspected or confirmed physical, sexual or emotional abuse of a Special Olympics athlete

Be ready to say...

- What makes you think this activity is suspicious
- When you witnessed the activity – or first suspected it

Who to tell...

- If the activity is during Special Olympics functions, tell local Special Olympics leadership (preferably staff)
- If you suspect that an athlete is in immediate danger, notify the police, and then Special Olympics staff
- If you are a mandatory reporter under your state's law, report as required in addition to the report you file with Special Olympics.
- Reporting is **NOT** the same as accusing. It just alerts professionals to investigate.

Am I a Mandatory Reporter Under My State's Laws?

- Nearly all states have laws that require some individuals to report suspected abuse (such as teachers, healthcare providers, etc.)
 - In some states, everyone is a mandatory reporter
 - Utilize the website below to familiarize with your state's reporting requirements (choose the state that you wish to check and "Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse & Neglect" and then click "go")
http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/state/
- In the state of Illinois you are a mandatory reporter!**

Volunteer Code of Conduct

As a Special Olympics volunteer, I agree that while serving as a volunteer, I will:

1. Provide for the general welfare, health and safety of all Special Olympics athletes and volunteers.
2. Dress and act in an appropriate manner at all times.
3. Demonstrate good sportsmanship; set an example for athletes and partners.
4. Follow the established rules and guidelines of Special Olympics Program, Special Olympics, Inc. and/or any agency involved with Special Olympics Program.
5. Report any emergencies to the appropriate authorities after first taking immediate action to ensure the health and safety of the participants.
6. Abstain from the consumption or use of all alcohol, tobacco products and illegal substances while involved with ANY Special Olympics Program event, competition or training school.
7. Not engage in any inappropriate contact or relationship with athletes, volunteers or other participants of Special Olympics Program.

Thank you for your interest, willingness, and efforts enabling Special Olympics athletes to develop their skills and become useful and productive citizens through the medium of sports!