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## **POLICY REGARDING VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF DATING SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETES**

### **Introduction**

Among the Special Olympics movement's highest priorities is the well-being of, and respect for the dignity of, Special Olympics athletes\*. The purpose of this document is to make clear Special Olympics policy on volunteers\* and staff dating Special Olympics athletes and to protect all participants in the Special Olympics movement, including athletes, coaches and staff, as well as Special Olympics organizations around the world.

Every Special Olympics Program must take all reasonable steps to ensure that athletes participating in Special Olympics do so in an environment that is free from abuse, intimidation, fear, pressure, or coercion from any person in a position of authority, including Special Olympics staff, coaches, and other volunteers. At the same time, Special Olympics respects the rights of every Special Olympics athlete to be treated with dignity and to have the same rights as every other human being.

### **Policy**

Special Olympics prohibits any Special Olympics staff member or volunteer (excluding spouses of athletes and athletes who are Class B volunteers) from dating or having a sexual relationship with any Special Olympics athlete. This policy applies even if the volunteer is associated with a different agency or team than the athlete. In the event that a Special Olympics organization learns of any dating or sexual relationship, the organization immediately shall require either: i) that the staff member or volunteer end his or her association with Special Olympics; or ii) that the association between the staff member or volunteer and Special Olympics will be terminated.

In the case of a Special Olympics athlete who is also a staff member or volunteer, the Chief Executive Officer of the organization where the athlete competes must evaluate the circumstances on a case-by-case basis and determine if an authority relationship exists between the staff/volunteer athlete and the competing athlete, and if it is determined that there is such a relationship, apply the above policy in the same manner as the policy is applied to non-athlete staff or volunteers.

Each Special Olympics Program should determine whether it is required by its national or local laws to report certain relationships between Special Olympics staff or volunteers and Special Olympics athletes to the appropriate authorities under any "mandatory reporting" or other requirements in place for that Program's jurisdiction, and comply with those requirements.

Special Olympics respects the rights of athletes to have the full range of human relationships available to other human beings. This policy shall not be interpreted as a limitation on the rights of athletes, but only as a restriction on Special Olympics staff and volunteers.

### **Implementation**

All Special Olympics organizations (e.g., SOI, Programs, and GOCs) shall implement the policy immediately.

\*The terms "Special Olympics athlete" and "athlete" refer to persons with intellectual disabilities. The term "volunteer" includes Unified Partners.