

# 2026 Winter Season

## Basketball Statewide Coaches Call

***Special Olympics***  
*Washington*



# Welcome



## Meeting Goals

- Align on key 2026 Updates for Basketball
- Equip coaches with practical training tools and practice plans
- Clarify rules, divisioning, and event-day procedures
- Outline responsibilities and where to get help



# Region Leadership Contacts

**East Region:** Webpage: click [HERE](#)

Grant Opland – [gopland@sowa.org](mailto:gopland@sowa.org) (Sports & Competition)

Tim Toon – [ttoon@sowa.org](mailto:ttoon@sowa.org)

**Northwest Region:** Webpage: click [HERE](#)

Nicole McAllister – [nmcallister@sowa.org](mailto:nmcallister@sowa.org) (Sports & Competition)

Chad VanderPoel – [cvanderpoel@sowa.org](mailto:cvanderpoel@sowa.org)

**Southwest Region:** Webpage: click [HERE](#)

Nicole McAllister – [nmcallister@sowa.org](mailto:nmcallister@sowa.org) (Sports & Competition)

Cheyenne Terry – [cterry@sowa.org](mailto:cterry@sowa.org)

# Upcoming Coaches Meetings



## **A Look Ahead! Regional Sports Calls**

East Region Basketball Call

Thursday December 4 @ 5:30PM

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/DtgJbnWkQOStciJSJsdL7g>

Northwest Region Basketball Call

Tuesday December 9 @ 5:30PM

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/6oWuW6QPSYyb6ffRfLSgBA>

Southwest Region Basketball Call

Tuesday December 9 @ 6:30PM

Join Zoom Meeting [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/i\\_dkikn8SZunoR\\_1s8dfWg](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/i_dkikn8SZunoR_1s8dfWg)

# Registration Updates and Reminders



- We sincerely apologize again for the discrepancies around expiration dates found within the reports sent – please disregard and refer to your Coach Zone.
- **Official Sports**
  - **Deadline: November 23, 2025 (11:59 PM) -> cleared in correct roles & on your “My Teams”**
- **Non Official Sports**
  - **Deadline: January 18, 2025 (11:59 PM) -> cleared in correct roles & on your “My Teams”**

Everyone — athletes, Unified partners, coaches, and chaperones — must be cleared through March 2, 2026

# Join Us for Office Hours and Registration Trainings this week!



- **Office Hours**

- ▶ **Monday – Friday:** 12:30 PM – 1:30 PM
  - ▶ Join via Teams: [Click here to join the meeting](#)
  - ▶ Join by Phone: +1 (469) 998-6045  
| Passcode: 98659562#
- ▶ **Wednesday:** 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM
  - ▶ Join via Teams: [Click here to join the meeting](#)
  - ▶ Join by Phone: +1 (469) 998-6045  
| Passcode: 868549604#

- **Registration Training**

- ▶ **Tuesday, November 18 (today)**
  - ▶ 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM: [Join via Teams](#)
- ▶ **Wednesday, November 19 (tomorrow!)**
  - ▶ 7:00 AM – 8:00 AM: [Join via Teams](#)
  - ▶ 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM: [Join via Teams](#)

# 2026 Sports & Competition Updates



## **New Age Category:**

- Addition of 30+ age group to foster more competitive opportunities.
- Age groups may still be combined if participation numbers are too low.

## **Athlete Hospitality Update:**

- As a continuation of Winter 2026 Events, full meals will not be provided at events.
- Athletes should bring their own meals.
- Light snacks such as power bars, chips, fruit, and drinks will be available

## **We will be hosting a Winter Games in 2026!**

### **Sports Offered at Winter Games Include:**

- Basketball, Cheerleading, USA Games Training Camp

# General Reminders & Updates



## GENERAL REMINDERS / UPDATES

### Multi Sport Athlete Policy

#### ✓ Individual + Team Sport: Allowed

Example: Swimming & Soccer

If both qualify for State → Team sport takes priority (impacts a roster).

#### ✓ Two Individual Sports: Allowed

Example: Athletics & Swimming

If both qualify for State → Athlete must choose one to advance in.

Note: Relays count as 'Team' events.

#### ✗ Two Team Sports: Not Allowed

Example: Basketball and Cheer(including Unified & Community teams)

Impacts rosters if both teams qualify; athlete must choose one.

#### ✓ Recreational Sports: No Limits

Athletes may join multiple recreational opportunities.

However, official sports take precedence over recreational events.

**Athletes and Unified Partners should not compete in both Unified Champion Schools teams and Community Teams during the same season.**



# Winter Season Registration



## **FINAL REGISTRATION / COMPETITION ROSTER FORM:**

Check your region webpage or contact Program/Sports Manager to **confirm FINAL REGISTRATION / COMPETITION ROSTER DUE DATE.**

Complete **specially generated FINAL REGISTRATION form** to submit in Registration Portal. Includes **participants / team names / scores.** ALL participants must be included – there will be an audit period to adjust “sport specific” information (Scores – Team Name – Everyone in correct event).

## **EVENTS OFFERED**

- Basketball Level 1 Individual Skills Competition
- Team Skills Competition
- Special Olympics Team Competition - Juniors (8-15), Seniors (16-21), Masters (22-29), Masters (30+)
- Unified® Team Competition - Juniors (8-15), Seniors (16-21), Masters (22-29), Masters (30+)

(A 30+ Age Group / Division may be developed where possible)

**In 2026 we will not offer Level 2 Individual Skills and 3v3.**

# Winter Season Registration



## Special Olympics Rules & Resources

- [Rules](#): Team Rules for 5v5 Play
- [Rules](#): Individual Skills & Team Skills
- [Individual Skills Scoresheet](#): Worksheet & Scoresheet for Individual Skills Competition
- [Team Skills Scoresheet](#): Worksheet & Scoresheet for Team Skills Competition

## Level of Play (No More BSAT!)

- Review the Resources for Level of Play:
  - Level of Play Overview: <http://specialolympicswashington.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/BASKETBALL-levels-worksheet.docx>
  - Level of Play Videos: [Level of Play Videos - YouTube](#)
- Submit your Teams Level of Play (Novice, Intermediate, Advanced)
- SOWA Sports Managers will produce pre-set divisions and teams will be given opportunity to provide feedback before final schedule is produced for Round Robin Play.
- Compete in Round Robin format at your areas Subregional Games\*\*
- Divisions will be set based on level and performance at previous competition.

# Winter Season Registration



## Age Categories

- New 30+ age category added; existing groupings remain available.
- The oldest team member's age will determine the age group for Doubles, Teams, and Unified Bowling.

## Advancement

- Athletes must compete at each subsequent level of competition in order to advance (SubRegional → Regional)
- No Need to resubmit scores or register again.

## Team Names

- All team entries must be identified by a team name. A team name shall only be used once.
  - IDENTIFIER (Location) + NAME
  - Example: Goldendale Timberwolves

# 2026 Basketball Updates



## Individual Skills as Progression and Purpose

### Why is the Purpose of Individual Skills?

- Individual Skills is a vital part of the athlete pathway — it's both:
  - 🕒 **A progression tool** for athletes developing toward team play.
  - ❤️ **A permanent competition opportunity** for athletes who thrive individually or need a different level of sport.

### Our 2025 Emphasis: Progression with Purpose

- In 2025, we observed many athletes **remaining in Skills despite high performance.**
- When an athlete **consistently approaches or reaches maximum scores**, they are ready to **advance to team competition.**



# Program Readiness: Building the Foundation

## Family & Athlete Engagement

### Host a Preseason Team Meeting

- Introduce your coaching staff and program philosophy.
- Review **Code of Conduct**: sportsmanship, respect, communication.
- Outline expectations for **attendance, transportation, and behavior**.
- Provide a “What to Bring” checklist:
  - Proper shoes, water bottle, reversible jersey, mouthguard (if required).
  - Positive attitude, readiness to learn.

### Communication & Transparency

- Establish clear communication channels (GroupMe, TeamSnap, email lists).
- Share your practice and competition calendar early.
- Clarify who to contact for: schedule questions, athlete absences, behavior concerns.

### Inclusion & Belonging

- Encourage families to cheer positively for all athletes.
- Reinforce the *Team* mindset — same standards for respect across all ability levels.
- Create “Family Captains” to help coordinate snacks, travel, or volunteer sign-ups.

# 'Three' Characteristics for Exceptional Coaching



## Why 'Why' Matters!

Coaching is purpose-driven. When you connect your reason for coaching with your athletes' reasons for showing up, you create meaning that goes beyond the game.

- Your program shifts the moment you build it around: *Why do I coach? Why do my athletes compete?*

## Practice how you Play!

Athletes with intellectual disabilities need **structure** and **predictability** to reduce stress. They thrive when practice mirrors competition — **the routine becomes the regulation.**

- The easiest tool? 👉 A **consistent team warm-up** used *every* practice and *every* game.

## Don't Say "Don't"

"Don't" statements make the brain rehearse the wrong action. "Do" statements give athletes a clear target and build confidence.

- Instead of: ❌ "Don't travel." Say: ✅ "Hold your pivot."
- Instead of: ❌ "Don't bunch up." Say: ✅ "Spread out wide."

# Building an Elite Practice



## Purpose + Preparation + Precision

- [Coaching Guide](#) – Basketball Terms, Conditioning examples, practice planning, basketball drills, etc.

***“Every great practice starts with a clear plan.”***

**Consistent Structure:** Elite programs follow a rhythm athletes can trust:

Segment	Focus	Duration
Dynamic Warm-up	Mobility, coordination, energy	10 min
Skill Development	Shooting, dribbling, passing	20 min
Team Concepts	Offense, defense, spacing	20 min
Competition	Controlled scrimmage or challenge	15 min
Reflection & Cooldown	Stretching, review, feedback	5–10 min

# Building an Elite Practice



## Individual Skill Reps & Feedback

- Every athlete should get maximum touches and purposeful reps.
- Provide specific, actionable feedback (“Keep your elbow under the ball”) vs. general praise (“Good job”).

## Tempo & Engagement

- Keep transitions fast (No standing around!)
- Balance intensity and inclusion: athletes should be *challenged and successful*.
- Use competition elements (timed drills, “beat the clock”) to keep energy high.

## Teach the Why

- Explain *why* each drill matters — connect skills to gameplay.

## Reflection & Growth

- Always finish with feedback and goals for next time.
- Celebrate small wins and effort, not just outcomes.



# Rules & Competition Updates



Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Bowling govern all competitions. Based on *International Basketball Federation (FIBA)* rules, with Specific adaptations to ensure inclusivity and fair play for athletes with IDD. Governing Body rules apply unless in conflict with Special Olympics rules.

- Special Olympics Basketball Resource Page: [Basketball](#)
- International Basketball Federation (IBF): <http://www.fiba.com/>
- Special Olympics Article 1: [Sports Rules Article 1](#)

# Rules & Competition Updates



## We need your Help! Team Scorekeepers

We are looking for teams to bring / provide 'team scorekeepers' during Winter Season Competition to help us improve our Basketball Events.

## Why This Change Matters

### 1. Inconsistent Game Data

- Fouls, scoring, lineups, and shot attempts have not been tracked consistently.
- We need *accurate, reliable stats* to place teams fairly and ensure competitive equity.

### 2. Hard to Find Skilled Volunteers

- Scorekeeping is a specialized role — and we often don't get enough people who know the game or can commit for the full day.
- Volunteer turnover mid-day leads to retraining, errors, and delays.

### 3. Supports Player Dominance Review

- Accurate stats help us identify imbalance, protect athletes, and reinforce fair play.
- Clear data helps with **divisioning, safety, and sportsmanship enforcement.**

### 4. Reduces Mid-Day Volunteer Shift Changes

- Volunteers rotate out — coaches' parents and assistants don't.
- This creates stability at the score table.






# Rules & Competition Updates

## Your Team's Responsibility

- Assign 1–2 **team scorekeepers** (parent, assistant coach, or athlete volunteer).
- These scorekeepers will keep **the official book and stats** during games.
- They will sit at the table and work alongside one SOWA volunteer clock operator.

## What SOWA Will Provide

-  Scorebooks for every team (distributed at your first tournament).
-  Official training in December & January for all team scorekeepers.
-  A SOWA volunteer to run the **clock and scoreboard** — your team helpers won't do timekeeping.

## What Scorekeepers Do on Game Day

- Arrive at the score table 5–10 minutes early.
- Bring their **team roster** and **team scorebook**.
- Exchange rosters, record starting lineups, and track:
  - Points scored
  - Fouls
  - Substitutions
  - Timeouts
  - Shot attempts (if trained)
- Sign the **official scorecard** after the game.
- Turn the scorecard in to the SOWA-assigned main scorekeeper.

# Rules & Competition Updates



## Timing / Length of Game

- **Community / Traditional Teams: 4 x 8 minute quarters with running clock.**
  - The clock will stop in the last minute of the game for each dead ball that occurs (i.e. foul shots, timeouts, injuries – only)
  - One Minute intermissions will follow both the 1st and 3rd quarters and a 5-minute half time.
  - A team is granted two (2), one minutes (1 minute) time outs per half. Unused time outs do NOT carry over into the second half.
- **Community / Unified Teams: 2 x 20 minute halves with running clock.**
  - The clock will stop in the last minute of the game for each dead ball that occurs (i.e. foul shots, timeouts, injuries – only)
  - 5-minute half time.
  - A team is granted two (2), one minutes (1 minute) time outs per half. Unused time outs do NOT carry over into the second half.

## Overtime

- If the score is tied at the end of the fourth quarter, the game shall continue with as many overtimes of three (3) minutes as necessary to break the tie.
  - Possession will be determined by a coin toss. Possession will alternate after that.

## No Show / Forfeit

- A “no-show” team is given a 5-minute grace period before receiving a FORFIET.

# Rules & Competition Updates



## Players

- A team shall consist of a minimum of five (5) players and maximum of ten (10) players.
- 5 Players are required to start a game. FIBA rules allow a team to continue to continue to play with as few as two (2) players.
  - The opposing team may, but is not required to, make adjustments proportional to their opponents loss in players

## Substitutions

- No Hockey Style Substitutions!
- Steps for making a proper substitution:
  - Players must check in with the scoring table
  - After a Dead Ball
  - When directed by the Official
- A Team may make a substitution during a time out.
- Free Throws: A substitution may be made – only after the first free throw attempt.

# Rules & Competition Updates



## Basketballs

- Men's Basketball (Seniors / Masters): Size 7 (between 29.5 – 30.7 inches)
- Women's Basketball (Seniors / Masters): Size 6 (between 28.5 – 29 inches)
- Youth Basketball (All): Size 5 (between 27 – 28.5 inches)

## Baskets

- For Competition, the official hoop will be 3.05 meters (10 ft) above the floor.
- A shorter basket of 2.44 meters (8 ft) may be used for junior division and wheelchair. (only if available based on venue / location)

# Rules & Competition Updates



## Uniform / Apparel

- All players must wear a basketball uniform with identifying numbers on both the FRONT and BACK of the Uniform.
- The uniform shirts and shorts should be identical in trim color and style.
- Undershirts, if worn, should match the color of the uniform, or be a plain white color.
- Head coverings are permitted but must meet FIBA Safety Standards.
  - Head Coverings may not be billed or have hard edges that pose a risk to other players.
  - Medical head coverings are permitted and shall meet the safety standards for a medical head covering.
- The Following Items are NOT Permitted:
  - Objects that could cut or cause abrasions (fingernails must be closely cut).
  - Hair Accessories and Jewelry.
  - Shoes with flashing lights, reflective material, or other adornments.

# Rules & Competition Updates



## Violations

3 second lane, travel, double dribbling are violations, however, they are called at the official's discretion according to skill level. Also – a violation that contributes to a clear advantage in any skill level will be enforced.

## Fouls

- All typical fouls are called and recorded.
- Bonus and double bonus free throws are awarded based on the total number of team fouls.
  - If a team receives its 7th team foul the opponent is awarded a 1on1 free throw attempt.
  - If a team receives its 10th team foul the opponent is awarded 2 free throw attempts. Team foul counts over in the second half! If a player commits their 5th personal foul – they will need to leave the game.

## Free Throw

- No one (including the shooter) can enter the lane until the ball has touched the rim. Remind participants numerous times.



# Rules & Competition Updates



## Foul Limits

- If a player commits their 5th personal foul – they will need to leave the game.
- If a player commits two (2) technical fouls – they will need to leave the game.

## Player Ejection

Should a player be ejected from a game for a flagrant technical violation, or disqualifying foul, such as violence, fighting, or unsportsmanlike conduct interpreted as excessive, that player shall be:

- Removed from competition immediately
- Will not be allowed to return to play for the duration of the tournament / competition / meet.
- The Head Coach MUST fill out a conduct form: [Athlete & Unified Partner Code of Conduct \(Link\)](#)
- The Program will assume responsibility of the athlete until arrangements are made to reunite them with their guardian
- Disciplinary action will be taken the following week of the tournament in partnership with Special Olympics Washington Staff.

# Rules & Competition Updates



## Defense

Any type of defense is allowed – includes full court press, zone, person to person.

## Player Dominance

At any level (Unified Partner or Athlete) is highly discouraged and could lead to disqualification.

Coaches are asked to “pull back” if the point spread is large enough to secure a win, i.e. no press, man to man, or fast break, require a certain number of passes before taking a shot.

# Code of Conduct



## Code of Conduct

Athlete, Coaches, and Spectators Code of Conduct has been included in the Winter Season Coaches Packet, SOWA Website, and can be found here:

[Athlete & Unified Partner Code of Conduct \(Link\)](#)

[Family Code of Conduct \(Link\)](#)

[Coaches Code of Conduct \(Link\)](#)

[Spectator Code of Conduct \(Link\)](#)

[Code of Conduct Violation Report \(Link\)](#)



# Code of Conduct

- Exhibit good sportsmanship on and off the field of play
- Physical and verbal abuse, profanity and other inappropriate behavior is strictly prohibited.
- There is a **ZERO TOLERANCE** policy for use of alcohol, illegal drugs, and controlled substances. (No smoking/tobacco use in restricted areas.)
- Refrain from illegal activities (felonies and misdemeanors), including the possession of harmful weapons.

**All policies below are strictly enforced for the safety of everyone on site:**

- **Smoking Policy:** Smoking is not allowed at ANY Special Olympics Washington event or competition area. There is absolutely NO smoking at the opening ceremony, or the Victory Dinner/Dance.
- **Service Animal Policy:** Only service animals are allowed at Special Olympics Washington practices, competitions and/or special events for safety reasons.
- **Drugs & Alcohol:** No use of alcohol, illegal drugs, and controlled substances.

Coaches must share these policies with their programs, including Athletes, Coaches, Chaperones, and Parents / Spectators

# General Policies



## Incident Report

To be covered, the injury must occur while: (a) participating in activities that are authorized, organized and supervised by Special Olympics; or (b) traveling to, during, or after such activities as a member of a group in transportation furnished or arranged by Special Olympics. Covered Event is defined as any scheduled activity authorized, organized and supervised by Special Olympics. With respect to competition activities, this includes pre-competition activities and practice sessions.

- ☐ Complete Incident Report Form
- ☐ Once complete, the form must be signed by all applicable parties, including any witnesses and Special Olympics Washington Staff, if applicable. The Program Coordinator should send this to their Regional Program Manager.
- ☐ Once fully completed and signed, the Incident Report will then be filed in by Special Olympics Washington Staff.
- ☐ Once a medical bill is received by the injured party (after they have submitted through their own insurance. This would be any costs after the fact.), submit the completed incident report form and the medical bill to Special Olympics Washington Staff

# Thank you



## Questions?