



# 2026 SPRING SEASON



**Special  
Olympics**  
Washington

## Spring Events & Programs



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>SPRING SEASON OFFERINGS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>REGION LEADERSHIP CONTACTS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2026 SPORTS &amp; COMPETITION UPDATES .....</b>	<b>4</b>
MULTI-SPORT ATHLETE POLICY.....	4
DIVISIONING & ARTICLE 1 .....	4
NEW AGE CATEGORY ANNOUNCEMENT .....	5
2026 ATHLETICS UPDATES .....	5
2026 SWIMMING UPDATES .....	6
2026 ATHLETE HOSPITALITY AT EVENTS .....	6
LOCAL SPORTS & INVATIONALS .....	7
<b>ATHLETICS REGISTRATION RULES &amp; CODES .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>SWIMMING REGISTRATION RULES &amp; CODES .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>SOCCER REGISTRATION RULES &amp; CODES .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>CODE OF CONDUCT VIOLATIONS .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>INCIDENT REPORT FORM PROCEDURE .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>CRISIS COMMUNICATION.....</b>	<b>21</b>



## SPRING SEASON OFFERINGS

2026 SPRING Season offerings will include the following in-person competitive and local / recreational sports:

Athletics – *Regional & State*  
Soccer – *Regional & State*  
Swimming – *Regional & State*

Cycling – *Local / Recreational*  
Walking Club – *Local / Recreational*  
Fit 5 – *Local / Recreational*

## REGION LEADERSHIP CONTACTS

### EAST REGION CONTACTS

**Sr. Manager of Competition & Operations, East Region**  
Grant Opland  
Email: [gopland@sowa.org](mailto:gopland@sowa.org) | Phone: 206-231-6014

**Program Manager, East Region**  
Tim Toon  
Email: [ttoon@sowa.org](mailto:ttoon@sowa.org) | Phone: 206-681-9385



### NORTHWEST REGION CONTACTS

**Sr. Manager of Competition & Operations, Western Washington**  
Nicole McAllister  
Email: [nmcallister@sowa.org](mailto:nmcallister@sowa.org) | Phone: 206-736-7087

**Program Manager, Northwest Region**  
Chad VanderPoel  
Email: [cvanderpoel@sowa.org](mailto:cvanderpoel@sowa.org) | Phone: 206-736-6235

### SOUTHWEST REGION CONTACTS

**Sr. Manager of Competition & Operations, Western Washington**  
Nicole McAllister  
Email: [nmcallister@sowa.org](mailto:nmcallister@sowa.org) | Phone: 206-736-7087

**Program Manager, Southwest Region**  
Cheyenne Terry  
Email: [cterry@sowa.org](mailto:cterry@sowa.org) | Phone: 206-681-9386

For more information on sports and competitions happening in your region check out the Special Olympics Washington Webpage and go to the following for information about your region:

[Northwest Region Sports](#)  
[Click Here](#)

[Southwest Region Sports](#)  
[Click Here](#)

[East Region Sports](#)  
[Click Here](#)



## **2026 SPORTS & COMPETITION UPDATES**

### **MULTI-SPORT ATHLETE POLICY**

1. Athletes can train and compete in an individual sport and a team sport in the same season (i.e. swimming and soccer). However, if an athlete qualifies to compete at state in both the individual sport and the team sport, the team sport (soccer) must be prioritized because it impacts a larger group of people or a roster of people.
2. Athletes can train and compete in two individual sports in the same season (i.e. athletics and swimming). If the athlete qualifies to compete at state in both sports, the athlete will have to choose which sport they will advance in. If athletes are competing and qualify in Team Relays, they will still need to choose the sport with the relay as that qualifies as a 'Team'
3. Athletes may NOT train and compete in two team sports (i.e. soccer and softball) in the same season. The primary issue here is that if both of your teams qualify in different sports, you will have to choose and will impact one of the teams or rosters. In this scenario, the athlete would impact the soccer or the softball rosters. *This includes participating in both Unified Champion Schools and Community team sports in the same season.*
4. With the expansion of recreational events, it is important to emphasize if an athlete is participating in a sport considered recreational that there are no limits to the number of sports opportunities in which they can take part in. However, an official sports event should take precedence over recreational opportunity.

### **DIVISIONING & ARTICLE 1**

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules provide standards for Special Olympics training and competition. [Article 1](#) provides general principles not found in the sport- specific rules and is essential knowledge for all people involved with Special Olympics sports.

Watch this quick video for an overview on [Special Olympics Divisioning](#)

Article 1 stipulates that a minimum of three participants is required for an event to be considered viable. Additionally, for competitions to qualify for Regional Competitions or a State Games, there should be representation across all three regions.



## **NEW AGE CATEGORY ANNOUNCEMENT**

Special Olympics Washington currently uses three age groups for competition: **8-15, 16-21, and 22+**. This year, where applicable, we will be adding a **30+ age category** to create more competitive opportunities for our athletes.

Please note that Special Olympics does allow age groups to be combined when events do not meet the minimum participation requirement of three athletes per group. This ensures fair and meaningful competition while allowing as many athletes as possible to participate.

For more details on the age categories and divisioning resources, please review [Special Olympics Article 1 \(One\)](#).

## **2026 ATHLETICS UPDATES**

After a comprehensive assessment of participation in previous seasons and in alignment with Special Olympics' Article 1, which emphasizes minimum participation standards, Special Olympics Washington has made the following adjustments to the 2026 Athletics competition schedule:

### **Removed Events:**

- All 5 Kilometer Races
- All 10 Kilometer Races
- 4x200 Relay Races
- Pentathlon
- 110 Meter Hurdles Men
- 100 Meter Hurdles Women
- High Jump

Article 1 stipulates that a minimum of three participants is required for an event to be considered viable.

[Special Olympics Article 1 \(One\)](#)

Additionally, for competitions to qualify for state games, there should be representation across all three regions. The events listed above have historically seen participation from only two out of the three regions, leading to their removal from the upcoming 2026 Athletics competition.

We understand that this decision may impact on some athletes and teams. Please know that this step is taken to ensure fair and competitive opportunities for all participants. We encourage coaches to explore alternative events within the Athletics program that align with their athletes' interests and abilities.



## 2026 SWIMMING UPDATES

After a comprehensive assessment of participation in previous seasons and in alignment with Special Olympics' Article 1, which emphasizes minimum participation standards, Special Olympics Washington has made the following adjustments to the 2026 Swimming competition schedule:

### Removed Events:

- 800 Meter Race(s)
- 1500 Meter Race(s)
- 4x200 Unified Freestyle Relay
- 4x100 Medley Relay

Article 1 stipulates that a minimum of three participants is required for an event to be considered viable.

[Special Olympics Article 1 \(One\)](#)

Additionally, for competitions to qualify for state games, there should be representation across all three regions. The events listed above have historically seen participation from only two out of the three regions, leading to their removal from the upcoming 2026 Swimming competition.

We understand that this decision may impact on some athletes and teams. Please know that this step is taken to ensure fair and competitive opportunities for all participants. We encourage coaches to explore alternative events within the Athletics program that align with their athletes' interests and abilities.

## 2026 ATHLETE HOSPITALITY AT EVENTS

In 2024, meals accounted for over 20% of total expenses for Regional Events. In 2026, we will be shifting to a **hospitality model** instead of providing full meals. While full meals (e.g., sandwich, chips, fruit, drink) will no longer be provided, hospitality offerings may include:

- Power bars, Chips, Fruit, Drinks, Fruit snacks

**Athletes should plan to bring a sandwich, snacks, and continue to bring a water bottle for competition.**

If your program needs assistance in Spring, please reach out to your Sports Manager and Program Manager for additional support.



## LOCAL SPORTS & INVITATIONALS

As we continue with our new sports advancement model, it is important to understand the difference between **Official Sports** offered by Special Olympics Washington (SOWA) and **Local Sports/Invitationals** organized by teams and communities.

### Official Sports

- Official sports meet minimum participation and regional representation criteria.
- These sports are managed directly by SOWA and include structured advancement opportunities.
- Athletes in official sports follow the pathway established by SOWA for advancement to higher levels of competition.

### Local & Recreational Sports

- Sports with fewer than 200 participants or less than 2% of total participation are considered *Emerging* or *Locally Popular*.
- These sports do **not** have guaranteed SOWA-hosted competitions during the season.
- Teams in these sports are encouraged to host their own events, invitationals, or scrimmages at the community level.
- SOWA provides support (insurance coverage, guidance, medals purchasing, and limited equipment/signage resources) but does not run the events directly.

### Invitationals

- An invitational is a locally organized event hosted by a team, program, or region.
- Invitationals are open to other local programs who are invited by the host.
- Host teams are responsible for securing facilities, insurance, medical coverage, and volunteers.
- Registration and Compliance:
  - Special Olympics Washington **MUST** be notified of events happening using the organizations branding and likeness
  - All Participants **MUST** be registered with Special Olympics Washington and be fully cleared by Special Olympics Washington for participation.
- SOWA can provide guidance and limited resources, but the event is primarily managed by the host program.

### Key Takeaway

If a sport is **listed as an official offering**, SOWA will run advancement events for that season. If a sport is **not listed as an official offering**, participation opportunities are still available, but they are created locally, through invitationals and community-driven events.

*For details on how to host a local event, refer to the Local Competition Guide. For criteria on how sports can grow into official offerings, review the Sports Advancement Criteria.*

Sports Advancement Criteria / Overview: [Click Here](#)  
Local Competition Guide: [Click Here](#)



# ATHLETICS REGISTRATION RULES & CODES

## Special Olympics Rules & Resources

- [Athletics Rules \(2024\)](#)
- [Athletics Resource Page](#)

## Special Olympics Washington Updates & Modifications

- 1) Athletes may participate in up to four events: two track (running) events, one field event and one relay.
- 2) Athletes may participate in either walking or running events that are not of the same distance. Walking events must be greater in distance than running events. (Example: An athlete in the 100M dash, must enter the 200M walk or greater.)
- 3) Athletes may participate in either the 50 or 100 meter dash, but not both.
- 4) Athletes capable of running the 50 meter dash in nine seconds or less must register for the 100 meter dash. If an athlete runs the 50 meter dash in less than nine seconds at the region event he or she will be disqualified and unable to participate at state in this event. The athlete will not be allowed to add another running event.
- 5) Athletes capable of throwing a tennis ball 5 meters or more must register for the softball throw. If an athlete throws the tennis ball over 5 meters at region he or she will be disqualified and unable to participate at state in this event. The athlete will not be allowed to add another field event.
- 6) Athletes capable of throwing a softball 15 meters or more must register for another field event. If an athlete throws over 15 meters at the region event he or she will be disqualified and unable to participate at state in this event. The athlete will not be allowed to add another field event.
- 7) A qualifying time/distance/score must be submitted for each athlete for each event.
- 8) Athletes able to jump a minimum of one meter, which is the distance between the toe board & the sandpit, are encouraged to enter the Running Long Jump.
- 9) All relay teams (4 members) must be identified by number R1, R2, etc.
- 10) All Unified relay teams (4 members) must be identified by number U1, U2, etc.
- 11) Unified relay teams shall consist of two Special Olympics Athletes and two Unified Partners. The order of running on the team is left up to the coaches' decision.
- 12) Events identified with \*\*are designed for athletes with lower ability levels who are unable to participate in other events.



- 13) Rules governing competition include Special Olympics International Athletics rules and USA Track and Field rules.
- 14) Athletes must register and compete within one category. For example, if an athlete registers for the AT400 and ATHIGH (Category F events) they can't register for the AT1500 (a Category G event). All two or three events must be in the same category.
- 15) For **Assisted Walking Events** (Category C), athletes must provide their own device. Assisted devices may consist of one of the following: Canes, Crutches, Walker
- 16) New for 2013 -15: Category D – Guided Events
  1. **Criteria**
    - Who can compete in a Guided event?
      - a) Blind or visually impaired athletes
      - b) Athletes with severe cognitive delay
      - c) Athletes that wander
  2. **Rules**
    - What are the requirements for guided events?
    - Athlete would have a guide positioned in the next lane
    - Two lanes will be used for all guided events.
    - Athlete and the guide must be connected by one of the following:
      - a) Rope
      - b) Baton
      - c) PVC Pipe
    - The length of the rope/baton/pipe is no less than 30 centimeters and no greater than 1 meter.
    - Rope can be wrapped around one of the athlete's and one of the guide's hands.
    - Velcro straps may be attached to the end of the rope/baton/pipe.
    - Tape will not be allowed to secure hands on rope/baton/pipe.
    - No more than four competitive teams (athlete/guide) in a heat.
    - Only the athlete will receive an award at the conclusion of the heat.
    - The athlete can't be jerked or be pushed by the guide. If jerked or pushed, the athlete will be disqualified.
    - The guide is allowed to use verbal cues while competing to communicate with the athlete.
    - The athlete must cross the finish line before the guide. If the guide crosses the finish line first the athlete will be disqualified.
- 17) Lane Violations
  1. In all races run in lanes, each competitor shall keep within his/her allocated Lane from start to finish.
  2. If a competitor is pushed or forced by another person to run outside his/her lane, and if no material advantage is gained, the competitor should not be disqualified.
  3. If an athlete either runs outside his/her lane in the straight or runs outside the outer lane on the bend,
  4. with no material advantage thereby being gained, and if no other runner is obstructed, then the competitor shall not be disqualified.



- 18) New for 2026 – Updated Categories - Beginning this season, **Categories E and F have been combined**, removing previous restrictions that limited athletes to specific running event groups.
1. **Athletes in Category E** are now eligible to participate in **any of the running or walking events listed**, ranging from the **50 Meter Walk through the 3000 Meter Run**, provided they meet the participation rules outlined above.
  2. This change is intended to **increase flexibility and opportunity for athletes**, allowing them to compete in events that best match their interests and abilities.
  3. Athletes competing in the following categories **are not included in this expanded running event selection** and must remain within their designated events:
    - Category A – Manual Wheelchair
    - Category B – Motorized Wheelchair
    - Category C – Assisted Walking
    - Category D – Guided Events



## ATHLETICS CATEGORIES AND EVENTS

### Category A

*Wheelchair:*

10 Meter Manual Wheelchair Race\*\*  
25 Meter Manual Wheelchair Race\*\*  
30 Meter Manual Wheelchair Slalom Race\*\*  
100 Meter Manual Wheelchair Race  
200 Meter Manual Wheelchair Race  
400 Meter Manual Wheelchair Race  
Tennis Ball Throw\*\*  
Softball Throw\*\*  
Wheelchair Shot Put

### Category B

*Motorized Wheelchair:*

25 Motorized Wheelchair Obstacle Race\*\*  
30 Meter Motorized Wheelchair Slalom Race\*\*  
50 Meter Motorized Wheelchair Slalom Race\*\*  
Tennis Ball Throw\*\*  
Softball Throw\*\*  
Wheelchair Shot Put

### Category C

*Assisted Walking:*

10 Meter Assisted Walk\*\*  
25 Meter Assisted Walk\*\*  
50 Meter Assisted Walk\*\*  
Tennis Ball Throw\*\*  
Shot Put  
Softball Throw\*\*

### Category D

*Guided Events:*

10 Meter Guided Walk\*\*  
25 Meter Guided Walk\*\*  
50 Meter Guided Walk\*\*  
100 Meter Guided Walk  
25 Meter Guided Race  
50 Meter Guided Race  
Standing Long Jump\*\*  
Shot Put  
Softball Throw\*\*  
Tennis Ball Throw\*\*

### Category E

50 Meter Walk\*\*  
50 Meter Dash\*\*  
100 Meter Dash  
200 Meter Dash  
400 Meter Run  
800 Meter Run  
100 Meter Walk  
200 Meter Walk  
400 Meter Walk  
800 Meter Walk  
1500 Meter Run  
1.5 Kilometer Race Walk  
1.5 Kilometer Unified Race Walk (2 person)  
3 Kilometer Run  
3 Kilometer Walk  
3000 Meter Unified Team Running (2 person)

### Field Events

Tennis Ball Throw\*\*  
Softball Throw\*\*  
Running Long Jump  
Standing Long Jump\*\*  
Shot Put  
Mini Javelin

### Relay Events (For Categories E Only)

4 x 100 Meter Relay  
4 x 100 Meter Relay - Walk  
4 x 100 Meter Unified Relay  
4 x 400 Meter Relay  
4 x 400 Meter Unified Relay

**4 x 100 Meter Relay (Walk):** In 2023 we introduced a 4 x 100 Meter Relay for Walkers. In 2026, the event is listed on the official registration and participants should register for either the 4 x 100 Meter Relay (Running Event) or the 4 x 100 Meter Relay (Walking Event)

#### **Long Distance Races (LDR):**

- All LDR Races, including Road Races and Race Walks include the option to walk.
- All LDR Races, including Road Races and Race Walks will take place on the track.



## SWIMMING REGISTRATION RULES & CODES

### Special Olympics Rules & Resources

- [Swimming Rules \(2024\)](#)
- [Swimming Coaching Guide](#)
- [Swimming Rules Emphasis Sheet](#)

### Special Olympics Washington Updates & Modifications

- 1) Athletes can participate in a total of four events. The maximum number of non-relay events an athlete can participate in is three.
- 2) Athletes may participate in a maximum of two relays. An athlete, who is registered in two relays, can only register for two events within one category.
- 3) Unified Partners can participate in a maximum of two Unified Relays.
- 4) A qualifying time **in meters must** be submitted for all athletes entered in swimming events. If the qualifying times are timed in yards, multiply the times by 1.11 to get times for meters. For example, a time of 31 seconds for 25 yards would be changed to  $31 \times 1.11 = \underline{34.41}$ . The time of 34.41 would be submitted as the time for 25 **meters**.
- 5) All relay teams (4 members) must be identified by number R1, R2, etc.
- 6) All unified relay teams (4 members) must be identified by number U1, U2, etc.
- 7) Relay teams will have a maximum of four and two alternates identified. Alternates may not be changed after Friday prior to Spring Games competition.
- 8) Unified relay teams shall consist of two Special Olympic Athletes and two Unified Partners. The order of swimming in the relay is left to the coaches' decision.
- 9) Rules governing competition include Special Olympics International Swimming rules and United States Swimming, Inc.
- 10) Athletes must register and compete within one category. For example, if an athlete registers for the 10 meter Assisted Swim and 15 meter Aquatics Walk (Category A events) they can't register for the 25 meter Freestyle (a Category B event). All two or three events must be in the same category.
- 11) A Relay team which combines genders to include both male and female swimmers shall compete as a male relay
- 12) Flotation Devices: For Flotation Events, each athlete is responsible for his/her own flotation device. The Device must be of the body wraparound type such that if the athlete were to not be able to hold onto the device, the device would still support the athlete with his/her face out of the water. (Flotation devices such as innertubes or floats that wrap around the arms are not acceptable for use at any time)
- 13) Exception Codes shall be written on athlete's arms along with bib numbers. Exception codes are used where a swimmer cannot comply with the correct swimming rules for race starts, cultural, health, or safety reasons.



## **SWIMMING CATEGORIES & EVENTS**

### **Category A**

10 meter Assisted Swim  
15 meter Aquatics Walk  
15 meter Flotation Race  
25 meter Flotation Race

### **Category B**

15 meter Unassisted Swim  
15 meter Unassisted Backstroke  
25 meter Flotation Race  
25 meter Freestyle  
25 meter Backstroke

### **Category C**

25 meter Freestyle  
25 meter Backstroke  
25 meter Breaststroke  
25 meter Butterfly  
50 meter Freestyle  
50 meter Backstroke  
50 meter Breaststroke  
50 meter Butterfly

### **Category D**

50 meter Freestyle  
50 meter Backstroke  
50 meter Breaststroke  
50 meter Butterfly  
100 meter Freestyle  
100 meter Backstroke  
100 meter Breaststroke  
100 meter Butterfly  
100 meter Individual Medley

### **Category E**

100 meter Freestyle  
100 meter Backstroke  
100 meter Breaststroke  
100 meter Butterfly  
100 meter Individual Medley  
200 meter Individual Medley  
200 meter Freestyle  
200 meter Backstroke  
200 meter Breaststroke  
400 meter Freestyle

### **Relays**

4 x 25 meter Freestyle Relay  
4 x 25 meter Unified Medley  
4 x 50 meter Freestyle Relay  
4 x 100 meter Freestyle Relay  
4 x 25 meter Medley Relay  
4 x 50 meter Medley Relay  
4 x 50 meter Unified Free Relay  
4 x 100 meter Unified Free Relay



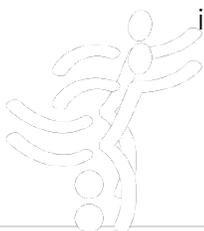
## **SOCCER REGISTRATION RULES & CODES**

### **Special Olympics Rules & Resources**

- [Soccer Rules \(2018\)](#)
- [Soccer – Highlighted and Modified Rules](#)
- [Soccer BSAT – Individual Assessment](#)
- [Soccer BSAT – Team Entry Form](#)
- [Soccer – Individual Skills Scoresheet](#)

### **Special Olympics Washington Updates & Modifications**

- 1) Athletes are limited to team competition or individual skills competition.
- 2) Individual competition is designed specifically for lower ability athletes who have not yet developed the skills necessary to participate meaningfully in team soccer.
- 3) All soccer teams' entries **must** be identified by a team name.
- 4) All 5-a side rosters **must** have a minimum of five players and a maximum of ten players.
- 5) Teams should compete in a minimum of four scrimmages or games prior to your region tournament.
- 6) Traditional teams consist of athletes only on their roster, while Unified teams consist of both athletes and unified partners.
- 7) Unified rosters shall contain a proportionate number of athletes and partners.
- 8) During Unified competition, the line-up shall never differ from three athletes and two partners at any time. Failure to adhere to the required ratio results in a forfeit.
- 9) Each team shall have an adult non-playing coach responsible for the line-up and conduct of the team during competition.
- 10) Athletes using wheelchairs and assistive walking devices are ineligible for soccer team competition for safety reasons, but may take part in Individual Skills Competition.
- 11) Rules governing competition include Special Olympics International rules and the United States Soccer Federation rules.
- 12) Only the following Lineups are Allowed:
  - a. 5-a-side Lineup: A team is allowed to play with a maximum of five and a minimum of three players. For UNIFIED only the following lineups are allowed:
    - i. 3 athletes and 2 partners
    - ii. 2 athletes and 2 partners
    - iii. 2 athletes and 1 partner





## **SOCCER EVENTS**

Soccer Individual Skill Competition

5-a side Traditional Team Competition - (8-15)  
5-a side Traditional Team Competition - (16-21)  
5-a side Traditional Team Competition - (22+)  
5-a side Traditional Team Competition - (30+)

5-a side Unified Team Competition Elementary- (8-13)  
5-a side Unified Team Competition Middle School- (14-15)  
5-a side Unified Team Competition – Interscholastic - (16-21)  
5-a side Unified Team Competition- SO College (22+)  
5-a side Unified Team Competition - Community (22+)  
5-a side Unified Team Competition - Community (30+)



## CODE OF CONDUCT VIOLATIONS

The Codes of Conduct were designed to establish a high standard of behavior for athletes, unified partners, coaches, volunteers, and family members to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone involved in our program. Whether in transit, during practice, at a competition, or at associated social or fundraising activity, all participants are expected to abide by the Codes of Conduct held by Special Olympics Washington.

Each participant should be aware of the Codes of Conduct to ensure behavior is in line with Special Olympics standards of behavior and should be given a copy at their first practice.

- If the participant is not aware of the 'Code of Conduct', we ask that a Program Coordinator or designated volunteer present them with a copy for review.
- It is the responsibility of Program Coordinators and Coaches to educate participants and uphold the Special Olympics Code of Conduct. It is recommended that each Code of Conduct is reviewed at a team practice or pre-season meeting to ensure all participants understand.

## CODE OF CONDUCT RESOURCES

[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 Report Form](#)



## CODE OF CONDUCT POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Below are examples of unacceptable behavior listed in the 'Codes of Conduct' that would be grounds for possible restriction, suspension, or permanent ban from Special Olympics Washington:

### Code of Conduct Behavior Examples:

- Poor Sportsmanship and/or cheating
- Disrespect for others, including officials and staff
- Use of profanity or verbal abuse
- Violence of any kind
- Use of alcohol, drugs, or any controlled substance
- Inappropriate or unwanted physical, verbal, or sexual advances
- Committing crimes or having a criminal history that violates Special Olympics Washington policies for participation
- Violating Special Olympics General rules and/or policies

**Warnings:** a notice of recorded behavior that could lead to a more severe course of disciplinary action. Warnings defined below should be done in order that they appear (for example: verbal warning, written warning, in-person meeting, etc.), however, Special Olympics Washington may skip warning levels depending on the severity and nature of the violation.

- **First Warning – Verbal:** A Verbal warning can be issued by head coaches, program coordinators, or Special Olympics Washington Staff. Coaches or Program Coordinators must document warning and notify Special Olympics Washington staff of the incident and supply documentation for records. Warning may be given in person or via phone. Please provide completed Conduct Report to staff within 24–48 hours of the incident.
- **Second Warning – Written:** A Written warning can be issued by the head coach or program coordinator but must be approved by Special Olympics Washington staff. Please provide completed Conduct Report to staff within 24–48 hours of the incident and they will provide more guidance on any additional documentation required for written warnings.



If a suspension or expulsion is being considered, the following documentation may be requested:

1. Copy of completed Conduct Report Forms, if applicable
2. Written summary of situation, that includes all steps taken to correct behavior of participant
3. Written testimonials from witnesses on site
4. Written references in support of person
5. Incident report form (provided by Special Olympics Washington), if applicable

### **Appeal Process**

Participants may appeal against any disciplinary actions imposed by Special Olympics Washington and should follow the appeal process outlined in the letter issued by Special Olympics Washington. The participant must submit a written request for appeal within 14 days of receiving disciplinary notice.

Special Olympics Washington will review the request and determine whether to uphold the disciplinary action or if additional information is needed.

### **Issues After Suspension**

If suspended or expelled participant attends sanctioned Special Olympics Washington event or continues to harass constituents of Special Olympics Washington, increased action may be taken by the organization.

### **Re-Entering Special Olympics Washington**

At the end of the suspension, if there are no additional issues that occurred during the suspension period, participant may re-enter program on a probationary basis. See probation definition above.

If a participant is expelled from Special Olympics Washington, they may not re-entry the program.



## CODE OF CONDUCT VIOLATIONS AT EVENTS

- 1. Immediate Action – Seek Support.** SOWA Staff are on site at most events to support Coaches and Program Coordinators during event days.
  - Program Coordinator and Coaches may seek support from a Special Olympics Washington (SOWA) staff member any time they wish during an event.
  - In a case where an incident has escalated beyond what would constitute an initial or verbal warning, a Program Coordinator or Coach should immediately seek the support of an onsite staff member. Staff should be notified in situations when, but not limited to:
    - i. Verbal Abuse of a Coach, Participant, or another Spectator
    - ii. Physical violence or Physical Altercations between persons
    - iii. Threats of violence on a person or a place
    - iv. Criminal Activity
    - v. Use of Drugs or Alcohol at a Special Olympics Event
  - Program Coordinators and Coaches should be aware of the designated staff member(s) available at the event to handle such situations.
  - In the event that a staff member is not present, please refer to the Crisis Communication Plan and seek immediate support from a designated Staff Member.
  
- 2. Notification Requirement:** It is imperative that the volunteer notifies Special Olympics Washington staff immediately following the incident. Prompt notification ensures that the situation is handled according to the organization's protocols and that all necessary steps are taken to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants.
  
- 3. Documentation:** Even when SOWA staff is involved, it remains the responsibility of coaches and any witnesses to complete and submit the Special Olympics Code of Conduct Report Form. This documentation should be provided to the staff within 24-48 hours of the incident to ensure that all details are accurately recorded and reviewed.



## **INCIDENT REPORT FORM PROCEDURE**

Special Olympics has an accident medical policy for Insured participants that responds when a covered accident has occurred during a covered event or during covered travel to or from a covered event. This is not a sickness or illness policy. An accident must occur for coverage to apply.

## **SPECIAL OLYMPICS INSURANCE POLICY & COVERAGE**

This policy is excess of any other valid and collectible insurance or medical plan that the injured participant may have, and participants must submit through their own insurance provider before submitting to HSR. Special Olympics Washington insurance is secondary to all other insurance the participant may have including Medicare and Medicaid. In order to access the secondary accident medical policy a First Report of Accident/Incident Form must be completed and submitted as soon as possible.

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.

Covered Event also includes activities authorized by Special Olympics that are Directly Supervised by Registered Class A Volunteers (practice), but only when participation is part of the Special Olympics athlete's overall sports training for Special Olympics, or for the purposes of qualifying for Special Olympics competition. Directly Supervised is defined as supervised in person by a Registered Class A Volunteer.

Insured Persons are defined as U.S. Special Olympics athletes (including Young Athletes), unified partners, managers, coaches, officials, chaperones, supervisors, fundraising participants, and other volunteers (whose names are on file with Special Olympics) while participating in a Covered Event.

## **INCIDENT & ACCIDENT REPORT PROCESS**

- 1.** Complete Incident Report Form
- 2.** 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.
- 3.** Once fully completed and signed, the Incident Report will then be filed in by Special Olympics Washington Staff.
- 4.** 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 American Specialty at the email below.



# CRISIS COMMUNICATION

## SPECIAL OLYMPICS WASHINGTON CRISIS TEAM

Who to Reach out to in the event of a Crisis?

**For State Events:** In the event of a crisis at a state event, immediately contact the Emergency Operation Center. If unavailable, then contact one of the following individuals on their cell phones in this order, Special Olympics Washington VP of Sports, Special Olympics Washington CEO.

**For Regional/Local Events:** For a regional or local event, please contact your onsite staff person. In the event that an onsite staff person is not present, please contact a member of your Region Leadership team such as your Region Program Manager, or Region Manager of Competition & Operations. If Unavailable, please call the Director of Sports Development, Tyler Bjork at (253) 880-5915.

**Local Practices:** Please contact a member of your Region Leadership team such as your Region Program Manager, or Region Manager of Competition & Operations. If Unavailable, please call the Director of Sports Development, Tyler Bjork at (253) 880-5915.

When Should I call or escalate a situation to SOWA Staff?

1. In any case where the incident requires a large scale response by emergency services.
2. Any incident listed below marked 'Contact SOWA'.
3. In the event that an crisis has potential to make headlines in the media.
4. When a Program Coordinator or Coach is seeking support or guidance.

In all cases, if the crisis has the potential to make headlines or should have large scale response from first responders, the following contacts should be notified in order: Region Manager of Competition/Operations, Director of Sports Development, VP of Sports, CEO, VP of Marketing and Communications.

Contact	Name	Cell Phone
Onsite Staff, if applicable		
Director of Competition	Tyler Bjork	253-880-5915
Senior VP, Development & Marketing	Joe Harvey	815-990-6003
Chief Executive Officer/Legal assistance	Mary Do	206-949-8783

\*These number should not be shared with participants and families and should only be used in case of emergency.



## CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN: STEP BY STEP OVERVIEW

The following are the steps that should be taken by staff/volunteers the event of a crisis:

- In case of an emergency, determine whether proper authorities have been notified (e.g., police, fire department, rescue squad). The first priority is to prevent further injury and give necessary treatment to individuals who are injured.
  - Attend and assess any victims.
  - Request first aid assistance or call 9-1-1. Have medical form ready if applicable.
  - Administer CPR by a qualified person only, if it is appropriate. Instruct volunteer(s) to not render any treatment beyond his/her training. Do not move an injured individual unless he/she is in immediate danger.
  - Request staff/volunteers to maintain crowd control.
  - If an ambulance is not necessary and a family member/guardian/friend cannot accompany the victim to the hospital, either stay with the athlete or appoint someone to do so until a family member/guardian/friend can arrive.
- If necessary, take a count of athletes, coaches, volunteers, etc. to keep the group together, whether in a hotel or at an event (remember to always keep a list of individuals who are attending the event with your team).
- Contact the appropriate member of the Crisis Communication Team as listed in the section above.
- If necessary, the Special Olympics Washington staff will notify appropriate field staff, the insurance company, legal representative, athlete/family members, Board of Directors, key sponsors/volunteers and Special Olympics North America.
- Cooperate with any medical personnel and/or law enforcement in completing any necessary paperwork.
- In the event of media presence, the standard response is **“A statement will be released by Special Olympics Washington after the organization has gathered all the facts and has time to review the situation.”**
  - Refer all media to call the VP of Communications or an available member of the Crisis Team. The Special Olympics Washington Crisis Team representative will gather all facts (which will be kept confidential) and formulate a statement to release to the media. Credibility is built much easier if a select few remain the lead contacts.
  - While volunteers’ assistance will be requested in providing information to the crisis team for the preparation of an official statement, **under no circumstance should a volunteer attempt to answer questions from media representatives at the scene.** A hastily given response lends itself to the emotions of the crisis and can very often be misinformation, which may damage the program. **Such misinformation is hard, if not impossible, to correct.**
- Record names and phone numbers of directly involved individuals present at the time of the incident for use on the Incident Report Form and for subsequent questions.
- Once the incident/crisis is over and all involved have been released to their own supervision or the supervision of others, call the Crisis Team to apprise the status.
- Complete an Incident Report Form and submit to Special Olympics Washington within 24 hours.