

2026 Spring Season Swimming Statewide Coaches Call

Special Olympics
Washington



Welcome



Meeting Goals

- Align on key 2026 Updates for Swimming
- 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 (Sports & Competition)

Tim Toon – ttoon@sowa.org

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

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

Nicole McAllister – nmcallister@sowa.org (Sports & Competition)

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Upcoming Coaches Meetings



Statewide Coaches Call | Athletics

Date: March 24, 2026

Time: 5:00PM - 6:00PM

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82763927548>

Meeting ID: 827 6392 7548

Call In #: +1 (253) 205 - 0468



Statewide Coaches Call | Soccer

Date: March 31, 2026

Time: 6:00PM - 7:00PM

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81738616153>

Meeting ID: 817 3861 6153

Call In #: +1 (253) 215 - 8782

Registration Updates and Reminders



March 16th: My Teams are locked/visibility removed while staff reviews participants/clearances based on role in My Teams. All pending team invites through 3/15/26 were accepted.

- Support requests and submitted forms will be reviewed/follow-up on based on event date. Any support request by 3/15/26 will be considered, anything after that date will not. Please do not send an additional support request if you already sent one.
- Direct emails will not be monitored - only replies to our communications will be monitored – during the clearance review.

March 30th: Competition roster due for those with events on 4/18-19

- Due dates will be included in your Welcome email
- Competition Rosters will be due in waves based on competition event dates.
- Programs will receive their competition rosters no later than the Wednesday before they are due.

May 11th: State Registration Due (more information to follow)

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

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.



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.

Code of Conduct & Team Culture



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 & Team Culture

- 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

Code of Conduct & Team Culture



Culture Is Part of your Job as a Coach
Culture Sets Behavior Before Rules Ever Do

The highest number of conduct issues we've seen

It's about unclear expectations + inconsistent environments

Most behavior issues are:

- Predictable
- Preventable
- Environmental

Code of Conduct & Team Culture



Where Coaches Make mistakes:

- Talking too much
- Correcting emotionally
- Inconsistent standards
- Ignoring small behaviors, then overreacting later

Code of Conduct & Team Culture



Tool 1: Pre-Correction & Modeling behavior

Pre-Correction (Set Expectations Early)

“Before we start—here’s what today should look like”

Define: Effort, Respect, Focus

Remind before transitions (practice, drills, meets)

Modeling (They Mirror You)

Your tone = team tone

Stay calm, clear, consistent

Show the behavior you expect: Respect, Patience, Control

Code of Conduct & Team Culture



Tool 2: Praise in Public, Coach in Private

- Correction - quietly, 1:1
- Praise - loudly, publicly

How do you Coach in Private during a busy practice - “The Walk”

- When athlete escalates, needs coaching: Remove audience, Reduce stimulus, Lower pressure

Script: Hey, walk with me for a second

Don't Lecture, Ask . . .

- “What's going on?”
- “What do you need right now?”

Code of Conduct & Team Culture



Tool 3: “Structure Eliminates Chaos”

Most behavior issues happen during:

- Transitions
- Downtime
- Confusion

Fix = Always have:

- Next drill ready
- Clear instructions
- No dead time

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).

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 (Program) + NAME**
 - Example: **West Plains Blue / Twin Rivers Thunder**

Rules & Competition Updates



Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Swimming govern all competitions. Based on *World Aquatics* 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 Swimming Resource Page: [Swimming Resource Page](#)
- World Aquatics: <https://www.worldaquatics.com/>
 - USA Swimming 2024 Rules: [Click Here](#)
 - USA Swimming Mini Rule Book: [Click Here](#)
- Special Olympics Swimming Rules: [2024 Swimming Rules](#)
- Special Olympics Washington Rules Emphasis: [Swimming Rules Emphasis Guide](#)
- Special Olympics Article 1: [Sports Rules Article 1](#)

Winter Season Registration



Sports Specific Registration Reminders

Athletes can only be a total of 4 Events

Max 3 Individual Events

Up to 2 Relay Teams

Athletes can only compete in events listed in a SINGLE CATEGORY

Category A athlete → cannot enter Category B/C events

Relay Structure:

Relays consist of a total of 4 Swimmers

Relays should be identified by a team name using the naming structure:

IDENTIFIER (Program) + **NAME** + **Relay Group**

Relay Group # should be listed as

R1, R2, R3

U1, U2, U3 (Unified)

Sport Specific Registration



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

Athletes must register and compete within one category.

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

Sport Specific Registration



Submitting Times

- All times must be submitted in **METERS**
- If using pool with yards → multiply times by **1.11**
 - Example: 31 sec (yards) → 34.41 (meters)
- Use format: **MM:SS.xx**
- No rounding or estimating
- Submit real, recent times

Sport Specific Registration



The Most Common Registration Mistakes

- Mixing categories
- Missing qualifying times
- Incorrect time format
- Duplicate or incorrect relay entries
- Submitting outdated / unrealistic times
- Not identifying relays correctly (R vs U)

Registration Checklist (Save This)

- Submit times in meters
- Use correct format (MM:SS.xx)
- Stay in one category
- Check relays + alternates
- Review before submitting

Rules & Competition Updates



Participant Equipment

For Competition all applications for an exception to FINA Rule on Swimwear must be submitted with the Swimmers Competition Registration.

Swimwear Design and Specifications:

- Decency: The wearing of the swimsuit shall not offend morality and good taste (in particular, but not exclusively, be of the cut of the suit and body parts exposure whether covered or not)
- Surface Covered (shape):
 - Men's Swimsuits shall not extend above the navel or below the knee
 - Women's swimsuits shall not cover the neck or extend past the shoulders, or below the knee

Rules & Competition Updates



Flotation Devices

- Each athlete is responsible for his/her own flotation device
- The Device must be of the body wraparound type 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, floats, water wings, or ones that wrap around the arms are not acceptable for use at any time.

Rules & Competition Updates



Event Specific Reminders / Overview

Unassisted Swims

Athletes Must swim the full distance with no assistance. Coaches, lifeguards, officials, and spectators are allowed to offer encouragement and direction to the swimmer, but only from outside the swimming pool.

Walking Events

- For all walking events, the athlete must have at least one foot touching the bottom of the pool at all times.
- Athletes in Walking events may be permitted to wear a flotation device. This should be communicated to your tournament director.
- Athletes using a flotation device must maintain one foot touching the bottom of the pool at all times.

Rules & Competition Updates



Event Specific Reminders / Overview

Assisted Swims

- Each Athlete is Responsible for having his/her own coach with them in the water. The assistant may touch, guide, or direct the athlete, but may not support or assist with the athlete's forward movement.
 - The assistant may be in the pool or on the deck
 - The athlete is allowed to use a flotation device.

Flotation Events

- Each Athlete is responsible for his/her own flotation device.
- Standing on the bottom in the racing course is allowed for flotation events for the purpose of resting, but walking on or jumping on the bottom must disqualify a competitor.

Rules & Competition Updates



Event Specific Reminders / Overview

Relays

- Relays consist of four swimmers who all swim one-fourth the distance of the total relay – NO SWIMMER shall swim more than on leg of any relay.
- Relay teams that combine genders shall compete as a male relay.
- Relay swimmers shall exit the pool as soon as possible following completion of their leg and should not interfere with other swimmers or the timing equipment.
 - Swimmers who cannot exit the water immediately may be allowed to remain in the lane until all relays have finished.

Rules & Competition Updates



Exceptions & Special Circumstances

- Exceptions or Special Circumstances should be communicated to the meet director prior to the event
- World Aquatics identifies 11 common exceptions though exception codes listed in the Rules. Sports Managers will provide information on how to identify.

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?