

# 2026 Spring Season Athletics Statewide Coaches Call

***Special Olympics***  
*Washington*



# Welcome



## Meeting Goals

- Align on key 2026 Updates for Athletics (*Track & Field*)
- 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



## 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



## 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

# Spring 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 (Regional → State Games)
- 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**

# Rules & Competition Updates



Official Special Olympics Sports Rules for Athletics govern all competitions. Based on *World Athletics* 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 Athletics Resource Page: [Athletics Resource Page](#)
- World Athletics: <https://worldathletics.org/>
- USA Track & Field (USATF): <https://www.usatf.org/>
- Special Olympics Athletics Rules: [2024 Athletics Rules](#)
- 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 2 Track Events
  - Up to 1 Field Event
  - Up to 1 Relay Event
- 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 Runners

- Relays should be identified by a team name using the naming structure:
  - **IDENTIFIER (Location - Program) + NAME + Relay Group**
  - Relay Group # should be listed as
    - R1, R2, R3
    - U1, U2, U3 (Unified)

# Sport Specific Registration



## 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)

# Sport Specific Registration



## 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

## Removed Events:

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

**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.

# Sport Specific Registration



## Registration Rules & Exceptions

**Athletes who Run and Walk:** 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.

**50 or the 100 Meter Dash:** Athletes may participate in either the 50 or 100 meter dash, but not both.

**50 Meter Dash:** Athletes capable of running the 50 meter dash in nine seconds or less must register for the 100 meter dash.

# Sport Specific Registration



## Registration Rules & Exceptions

**Tennis Ball Throw:** Athletes capable of throwing a tennis ball 5 meters or more must register for the softball throw.

**Softball Throw:** Athletes capable of throwing a softball 15 meters or more must register for another field event.

**Standing Long Jump to the Running Long Jump:** Athletes able to jump a minimum of one meter, which is the distance between the toe board and the sandpit, are encouraged to enter the running long jump.

# Sport Specific Registration



## Submitting Times

- All times must be submitted in **METERS**
- Use format: **MM:SS.xx**
- No rounding or estimating
- Submit real, **most accurate** times

## Submitting Distances (Field Events)

- All distances should be submitted in **METERS**
- Round to the nearest tenth of a decimal.
- Example: **3.44 Meters = 3.4 Meters**

# Sport Specific Registration



## **The Most Common Registration Mistakes**

- Mixing categories
- Missing qualifying times
- Incorrect time format
- Duplicate or incorrect relay entries
- Submitting unrealistic times
- Relays coded wrong (R vs U) or no "Identifier" included

## **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

## Event Specific Reminders / Overview

### **Walking Events**

- Athlete must have one foot in touch with the ground at all times
- In Race walking events, the competitor shall be disqualified with no prior warning when, in the opinion of two or more officials, a technical violation has been committed that results in an advantage

# Rules & Competition Updates



## Event Specific Reminders / Overview

### **Assisted Events**

- Assisted events are event in which the athlete uses an assistive device, such as a Cane, Crutches, or a Walker.
- Assisted Event and Wheelchair events are different. Athletes in Wheelchairs should sign up for Wheelchair specific track events
- Athletes are responsible for bringing their own assistive device.

### **Wheelchair Events**

- Athletes shall start with all wheels behind the start line.
- Motorized wheelchairs shall not be allowed in manual wheelchair races.
- Only athletes who ambulate by use of a wheelchair may participate in the events.
- Athletes shall not be pushed, pulled or otherwise assisted during these events.

# Rules & Competition Updates



## Event Specific Reminders / Overview

### **Guided Events**

- Guided events exist for athletes who are
  - Blind or Visually Impaired
  - Athletes with severe / profound disability
  - Athletes that wander or need 1:1 support at all times
- Two lanes will be used for all guided events. Athlete would have a guide positioned in the next lane
- Athlete and the guide must be connected by one of the following: Rope, Baton, PVC Pipe
  - 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.

# Rules & Competition Updates



## Event Specific Reminders / Overview

### Relays

- Relays consist of four runners who all run one-fourth the distance of the total relay – NO RUNNER shall run more than on leg of any relay.
- Please plan to bring your own Baton!
- Exchange Zone: Baton must be passed **within the exchange zone**
  - Dropped Baton must be picked up by the athlete with no outside assistance.
- Lane Rules: Athletes must stay in teams assigned lane throughout the duration of the race
  - Once you have completed your leg of the relay, please stay in your lane until an official tells you it is safe to leave your lane.
- Disqualification Triggers:
  - Passing the baton outside of the exchange zone
  - Obstruction of another team
  - Incorrect Team Composition.

# Rules & Competition Updates



## Event Specific Reminders / Overview

### **Lane Violations**

- Athletes must stay in their lane from the start of the race to finish. Best practice is that athletes should stay in their lane until an official tells them it is safe to move

### **Exceptions to Lane Violations:**

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ If an athlete either runs outside his/her lane in the straight or runs outside the outer lane on the bend, with no material advantage thereby being gained, and if no other runner is obstructed, then the competitor shall not be disqualified.

# 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?