



AREA SERVICES HANDBOOK

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A Letter from our CEO

Thank you for stepping up to a leadership role for Special Olympics Washington in your Area. Working together, we will build a Special Olympics Program that reaches more communities with better programming than ever before. Special Olympics is growing and changing, and it is my hope that this guide helps you organize yourself and the volunteers who sign on to help you on this journey. I am pleased to provide our Special Olympics Washington Area Handbook. This guide is a resource for Area Leadership, providing the necessary information and tools to manage the Special Olympics programs in each Area and the communities you serve.

Area Leadership is critical to the successful organization of Special Olympics programs at the grassroots level. This is the foundation of our worldwide movement and the starting point for each athlete's participation.

This guide includes:

- **Part 1:** A Quick Start Guide to Developing an Area Leadership Team
- **Part 2:** Growing & Sustaining an Area
- **Part 3:** Resources

The Special Olympics Washington Area Handbook can serve as a tool to engage new Area Leadership, providing the Area Director with information and tools necessary to build a foundation for the Area. Parts 2 and 3 provide the next level of resources to grow the Area by offering new and expanded opportunities.

Our staff are here to offer additional guidance and support as you work tirelessly to engage athletes in Area sports, training, and competition opportunities.

Thank you for your commitment to our athletes and the Special Olympics movement.

Dave Lenox

President & CEO

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Introduction

What is an Area and what purpose does it serve?

The Area is the direct service unit for program coordinators and coaches within SOWA. The Area engages with the public to provide sports training, competition opportunities, and related activities. The Area is the umbrella for a specific geographic region that encompasses all the programming, training, and competition opportunities available to SOWA athletes in that Area. An Area therefore supervises and insures compliance with all SOI and SOWA requirements for existing independent Special Olympics clubs, schools, colleges or universities, independent living facilities, Parks and Recreation Departments, adult service providers, professional sports clubs, geographic communities, counties, or other training groups that include registered Special Olympics athletes.

While everyone in the Special Olympics global movement plays a vital role, the importance of the Area level of the organization cannot be emphasized enough. It is at the grassroots level of the movement that most people engage with Special Olympics. This grassroots level is where fans cheer on their family, friends, and neighbors who compete, and it is where communities of inclusion are built.

With so many leaders at the grassroots level, the SOWA Area Guide is an important tool. The Area provides an empowering experience for Special Olympics athletes, Unified Sports® partners, families, volunteers, supporters, and fans. The Area makes the first impression about this movement.

The conduct of the Area can either enhance or hurt the Special Olympics brand. When someone calls to learn more, sign up, donate, or volunteer, did they receive a call back in a timely manner? At Area Games, did the venue convey that these are authentic sports teams and is the competition taken seriously? Were athletes competing in uniforms, or were they wearing inappropriate competition apparel? All these things help shape the perception of Special Olympics and the Area.

Take pride in your Area by building a team of leaders who share the Special Olympics vision of excellence. This guide is intended to help empower and educate volunteers and staff – critical Area leaders – so that quality Areas can be developed in all communities.

Who is this guide for?

The SOWA Area Guide has been created by Special Olympics Washington to be used as a tool for training Area Directors and their Leadership Teams. Whether training a new Area Director or a long-time team member, this guide provides the necessary information to be successful.

The first step is to identify an Area Director who will lead and oversee essential programming, including building a leadership team of volunteers who will help manage crucial areas. To provide support to Area Directors, the Accredited Special Olympics Program (SOWA) serves as the parent program, providing individual Areas with relevant and appropriate guidance, information, resources, policies, and procedures.

This guide will serve as the framework for each Area, which can then be tailored based on the needs, structure, and policies of individual Areas. This guide has 3 sections covering crucial information for the success of your Area:

- **Part 1:** A Quick Start Guide to Developing an Area
- **Part 2:** Growing & Sustaining an Area
- **Part 3:** Resources



What does an Area Director need to know?

The Area Director is **never alone**. By building a **LEADERSHIP TEAM** of volunteers all the following tasks can be shared and made more manageable:

- Athlete recruitment, registration, and tracking of medical forms
- Unified Sports® partner recruitment, registration, and tracking
- Coach recruitment, education, and tracking
 - Education includes ensuring that coaches are properly trained and certified
- Volunteer recruitment, tracking, and processing Class A Volunteer forms
 - This includes General Orientation, Sudden Cardiac Arrest, and Protective Behaviors with the additional mandatory Concussion Training for coaches
- Competition and training
- Athlete Leadership
- Branding (including use of logo)
- Communications with athletes, families, Unified Sports® partners, care providers, volunteers, and public
- Health and safety; risk management
- Fundraising, including compliance at all levels
- Finance, including compliance at all levels

In addition to the functions listed above, **the Area Director** is expected to **engage** key volunteers to assist with the following:

- Compliance with all Special Olympics, Inc. (SOI) and SOWA policies, rules, and practices
- Ensure that only athletes with valid medical forms and volunteers with valid Class A forms are allowed to participate and be in direct contact with the athletes
- Athlete training, including ensuring that there are enough trained coaches
- Safe, secure, and appropriate training facilities
- Ensure that proper procedures are followed for insurance and signing contracts
- Develop partnerships to effectively run the program
- Ensure athletes have access to proper sports equipment
- Registration and arranging participation in higher-level competitions
 - (This includes establishing that there are chaperones, transportation arrangement, and lodging available)
- Transportation to competitions

General Rules of Special Olympics

These [general rules](#) below are the guiding principles of Special Olympics and set the standard for which each accredited program should operate. We use these 'General Rules' as the foundation for the creation of our Area system and a standard for which they should operate. Please review the articles below as well as the additional policies listed.

1. **Article 1-Mission, Goals & Founding Principles**
2. **Article 2-Special Olympics Athletes**
3. **Article 3-Sports Training and Competition**
4. **Article 4- SOI's Governance of Special Olympics**



5. **Article 5-Governance and Operation of Accredited Programs**
6. **Article 6-Accreditation of Programs**
7. **Article 7-Fundriasing and Development**
8. **Article 8-Financial arrangements, Fiscal accountability, Insurance**
9. **Article 9-Interpreation of General Rules**
10. **Article 10-Definitions; Structure of Special Olympics**

Article 1-Sports Rules

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules (“Sports Rules”) provide standards for Special Olympics training and competition. [Article I](#) provides general principles established by the Special Olympics Official General Rules (“General Rules”) that are not found in the sport-specific rules. In case of any conflict between the Sports Rules and the General Rules, the General Rules shall govern.

Additional Policies for Area Leadership Teams

In addition to the ‘General Rules’ set forth by Special Olympics International that should be used as our operating standards and guidelines, below are specific policies for Special Olympics Washington Area Leadership Teams. Please follow the link to the corresponding section for further explanation for each policy:

1. **Singular Role Policy (Area Director Only)**-Area Director’s cannot also be Local Program Coordinators to avoid conflict of interest and ensure the Area Director remains unbiased.
2. **Transportation Policy and Guidelines-Page 42**
3. **Deposit Banking Policy-Page 44**
4. **Petty Cash Policy-Page 44**
5. **Recommending Suspension-Page 45**

Part 1: A Quick Guide to Developing an Area

Section 1: Overview

Mission & Vision

We are a catalyst for inclusion! Special Olympics Washington is the leader in sports, inclusive health, and community building, empowering children, and adults with intellectual disabilities to be valued on and off the playing field.

Special Olympics Philosophy

Special Olympics is founded on the belief that people with intellectual disabilities can – with proper instruction and encouragement – learn, enjoy, and benefit from participation in individual and team sports. Special Olympics believes that consistent training is essential to the development of sports skills, and that competition among those of equal abilities is the most appropriate means of testing these skills, measuring progress, and providing incentives for personal growth.

Special Olympics has demonstrated that, through sports training and competition, people with intellectual disabilities can benefit physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. Additionally, families are strengthened and the community at large – both through participation and observation – comes to better understand people with intellectual disabilities in an environment of equality, respect, and acceptance.



Goal

The goal of Special Olympics is to provide individuals with intellectual disabilities of all ages the opportunity to participate as productive and respected members of society at large. This occurs by offering ongoing opportunities for these individuals to develop and demonstrate their skills and talents through sports training and competition. This is done while also increasing the public's awareness of their capabilities and needs, creating welcome communities of inclusion around the world. To learn more about Special Olympics, visit <http://www.specialolympics.org/>.

Sports

Training and competition in a variety of sports takes place at all levels of the Program. Special Olympics' primary goal is to provide year-round training and competition opportunities, which are directed by qualified coaches. Individuals and teams compete in divisions according to gender, age, and ability. Each Area Leadership Team plays a part in determining the sports offered in their Area. Prior to each sport-specific season, volunteer coaches are trained and certified at clinics conducted by sports experts. Officials and Game Management Team members also receive training.

Support Structure

Special Olympics, Inc.

Special Olympics Inc. (SOI) is responsible for the overall leadership and management of all Special Olympics Programs, while providing technical assistance to each of the seven Special Olympics regions across the globe — which supports 5.6 million athletes and Unified Sports® partners in 172 countries. With the support of more than 1 million coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics delivers 32 Olympic-type sports and over 111,000 competitions throughout the year. Special Olympics is a global movement that unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sport every day around the world. Through programming in sports, health, education, and community building, Special Olympics is changing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities by addressing the global injustice, isolation, intolerance, and inactivity they face.

Special Olympics North America (SONA)

Special Olympics North America (SONA) is one region of SOI and is responsible for helping implement the policies and initiatives of SOI. SONA must also support and guide each of the Accredited Programs within North America (Canada, the United States, and the Caribbean).

Special Olympics Accredited Program (SOWA)

Each Special Olympics Accredited U.S. Program is a non-profit [501(c)(3)] charitable organization, incorporated to provide sports training and athletic competition for persons with intellectual disabilities. It is accredited by SOI and is responsible for following the policies and rules established by SOI in its delivery of services. It is known as a "Program" (with a capital "P") of Special Olympics. (Example: Special Olympics Washington).

Area Program

SOWA is divided into smaller geographic regions, called Areas. Areas are established to provide support, assistance, and competitive opportunities to the local programs. In this way, they can better assist local programs in their services to athletes, coaches, families, and volunteers of various communities. Each of these Areas has an active Leadership Team of volunteers that provides assistance with its operations. (Examples include: King County, North Central, Southeast, etc.)



Local Program

The local program is the direct service unit for athletes and their family members within an Area. The local program engages with the public to provide training and competition opportunities, while creating inclusive communities. Training and competition are provided for individuals with intellectual disabilities and Unified Sports® partners. The local program is at the grassroots level of the Special Olympics movement.

Athletes may practice in up to two Special Olympics sports per season. During Competitions, Athletes must compete with their Team Sport

Donor/Sponsor

It is through donors' and sponsors' financial support of the Special Olympics mission that athletes can train and compete free of charge across the globe.

Section 2: Area Leadership Team

A successful Area Director will ensure the sustainability of the Area by creating an Area Leadership Team of volunteers to provide leadership, administration, and oversight.

Although each area varies in size and culture, a team structure supports opportunities for programs, coaches, athletes, families, and additional volunteers as the area grows.

Who do you recruit as Area Leadership Team members?

- Professionals with experience in key functional areas such as finance, public relations, fundraising, sports, etc.
- Current coaches and volunteers
- Parents and other family members
- Community sports programs, civic groups, rotary clubs, and fraternal organizations
- Military and police organizations
- Unified Sports® partners
- Athletes
- Teachers, professionals, and paraprofessionals in school settings – from elementary through high school, as well as colleges and universities
- Professionals and young professionals in partnering agencies and businesses

What areas will the Area Leadership Team focus on?

- Leadership
 - Works with and leads their Coaches, Families, Athletes, Volunteers and Leadership Team
 - Delegates to a committee if/when appropriate
 - Oversees finances and fundraising activities
- Sports
 - Works with and supports coaches and program coordinators to implement registration, training, and competition
 - Assist programs secure facilities, transportation, and equipment
- Administration
 - Ensures all necessary paperwork is correct and processed on time for events



- Finance and Fundraising
 - Ensures all budgets are monitored monthly and adjust fundraising goals as necessary to cover expenses
 - Provides support to Area Leadership Teams for fundraising
 - Develops area fundraising opportunities to cover area expenses.
- Initiatives
 - Ensures that families within their area are getting the support and resources needed.
 - Develops Athlete Input Councils and other athlete leadership engagement opportunities.
- Health
 - Works with SOWA Staff to provide health and wellness programming and opportunities.
- Coaches Education
 - Ensures coaches are certified and background checked
 - Provides developmental and training opportunities for coaches
- Volunteers
 - Recruits, trains, and assigns volunteers while ensuring that Class A criteria have been met (more on Class A Volunteers in Section 3: Functions)
 - Oversees communications with volunteers, programs, and coaches
 - Maintains area social media

How is the Area Leadership Team shaped?

- An Area Director should assess experience, expertise, and skills of volunteers and partners engaged in the program
- An Area Director should work with SOWA staff to ensure all Area Leadership Team members are educated about Special Olympics and trained for the role they will play
- An Area Director should facilitate, at minimum, a monthly meeting with the Leadership Team to plan ongoing activities and guide Area growth and development
- An Area Director should ensure that the team creates a plan for succession as members rotate off
- The Leadership Team member's roles should be clearly defined. Utilize the job descriptions provided by SOWA for these roles.

As Areas grow and expand, the Leadership Team may add one or more of the following roles and responsibilities based on need so that direct and responsive services are provided. You may find the job descriptions and onboarding & training process on the [Area Resources Webpage](#).

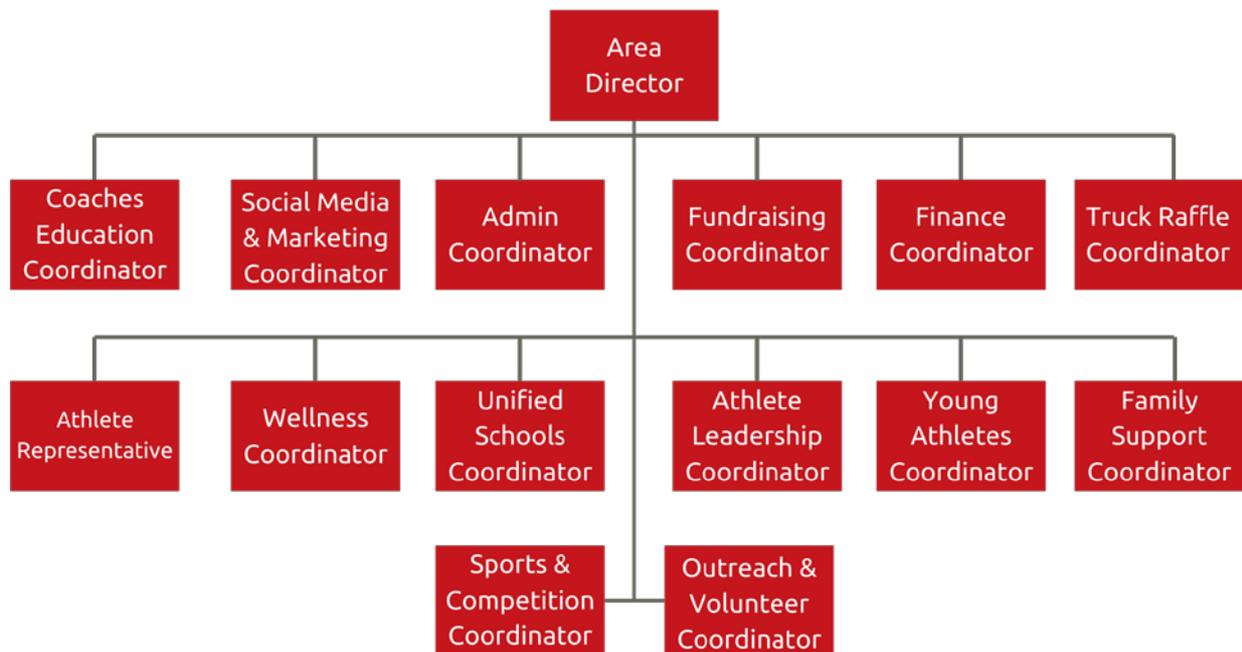
- **Administration Coordinator:** Manage Applications for Participation (AFPs), Unified Partner Release Forms, WSP Clearance Forms, and all necessary paperwork needed for competitions and facility uses. Communicate with program coordinators, coaches and athletes to ensure that all athletes have valid AFPs to participate.
- **Athlete Leadership Coordinator:** Ensure that athlete input, participation, and leadership are included in all areas of programming within their Special Olympics Area by connecting athletes to opportunities to lead and providing training when necessary to volunteers, families, and coaches about co-leading. Coordinators also provide training and support, when necessary, to athlete leaders and volunteer facilitators.
- **Athlete Representative from the AIC:** Athlete Representatives are Area Athlete Input Council members who are voted on by their Area's AIC to represent them. The Athlete Representative should ensure communication between the AIC and the Area



Leadership Team and be a voice for athlete input & leadership in Area plans and programming.

- **Coaches Education Coordinator:** Ensures that all SOWA coaches in the area have obtained proper certification through SOWA & SONA Coach Education System. Help coordinate and organize local training opportunities based on the need of the area.
- **Family Support Coordinator:** Ensure that SOWA families in the area are supported in their SOWA experience. This includes providing the opportunity for input and connecting families to helpful resources offered in their community.
- **Fundraising Coordinator:** Oversee plans to raise funds necessary to support the area and support Area Leadership Teams in fundraising endeavors.
- **Finance Coordinator:** Oversee all aspects of financial administration for the area. This includes managing all Area Leadership Team and area budgets.
- **Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator:** Recruit and manage volunteers, athlete inquiries, and ensure that Class A and B criteria are met. Assist with communication regarding General Orientation, Protective Behaviors, Sudden Cardiac Arrest, and Concussion Training
- **Social Media and Marketing Coordinator:** Provide both internal and external communications and marketing of the area and Area Leadership Teams
- **Sports & Competition Coordinator:** Coordinate sport-specific training and competition for any available sport offered and recruit qualified coaches. Also, will work to secure practice facilities and equipment for programs and teams.
- **Truck Raffle Manager:** Required for Areas to participate in the annual Truck Raffle Fundraiser. This position spans an estimated 6 months, and requires money handling, ticket management per Government regulations, and sales coordination. Areas with larger geographical locations can have more than one Truck Raffle Manager.
- **Unified Schools Coordinator:** Work with the Director of Unified Schools to recruit schools and provide support as schools continue to grow. Maintain close communication with school teams to help athletes and Unified Sports[®] partners transition to the Area Leadership Teams (from the school).
- **Wellness Coordinator:** Direct athletes and family members to needed health services and resources. Assist the SOWA health staff in implementing Healthy Communities programming. Facilitate community partnerships to increase health, wellness and fitness opportunities for athletes and families
- **Young Athletes Coordinator:** Develop and support Young Athletes programs in the Area. Recruit and train volunteer coaches, support coaches to develop and run programs, and work with Initiatives Manager to maintain programming.

Below is an example of an Area Leadership Team structure:



Planning

Planning ensures that the Area Leadership Team stays on track, evolves, and adjusts to change. The Area Leadership Team's plan should be aligned with SOWA.

Short-Term Planning

Short-term planning involves immediate plans, typically for the upcoming season. *Considerations include:*

- Financial
- Coaches and volunteers
- Facilities
- Complete and current registration
- Fundraising events
- Transportation Needs
- Sport standards and assessments

Medium-Term Planning

Medium-term planning may look at the coming year.

Considerations include:

- Competitive opportunities
- Training opportunities for the leadership team, program coordinators, coaches, and athletes
 - **TIP:** Create a calendar of events and important dates, such as approaching deadlines
- Financial needs, including expenses and revenue
- Fundraising events
- Leadership Team development



- Marketing and communications
- Other activities or opportunities that may be available to stakeholders

Long-Term Planning

Long-term planning is essential for the sustainability of the Area Leadership Team. Long-term planning typically involves a three to five-year cycle. It considers what the Area Leadership Team will look like in five years (both programmatically and financially). This plan should be compatible with the direction of SOWA.

To establish a successful long-term plan, the following steps should be followed:

- Ensure that long-term goals are compatible with the direction of SOWA
- Review and assess Special Olympics Program Quality Standards for ideas and examples that can be adopted to improve the Area Leadership Team.
- Solicit ideas and feedback of all stakeholders in the Area Leadership Team. This includes athletes, program coordinators, coaches, families, volunteers, donors, and partner agencies.
- Succession planning! Not only for ALTs but for program coordinators

Develop a plan based on this information and **share!**

Monthly Area Leadership Team Meetings

The Area Leadership Team needs to meet monthly, at minimum. Effective meetings and planning will help to establish and maintain a successful Area Leadership Team and Area.

Area Leadership Team Meetings

The Area Directors creates an agenda that allows for area reports and discussion. Guiding points to running an effective meeting include:

- Gather input from Leadership Team members on things they need and want to discuss specific to their roles.
- Set the agenda and distribute it to Leadership Team members prior to the meeting.
- Start (and end) the meeting on time.
- Set the ground rules for the meeting. Share the objective(s) of the meeting and the projected outcomes with the Leadership Team.
- Include reports from Leadership Team members.
- End with an action plan.

Sample Agenda for an Area Leadership Team Leadership Team Meeting

- Set the table: Area Director to outline the meeting
- Mission Moment – Ask a member of the Leadership Team to share an experience that supports the mission of Special Olympics.
- Leadership Team Member Reports:
 - Area Director
 - Finance Coordinator—where are we at financially?
 - Fundraising Coordinator—upcoming fundraising events? Targets for fundraising?
 - Coaches Coordinator – Major sports coming up in the next season? What trainings do we need to offer? (i.e. Spring = Track/Swimming)



- Sports & Competition Coordinator—what events are coming up? What sports are being offered?
- Communications/Administration
- Athlete Leadership
- Athlete voice
- Other Reports
- Current Sports Season
 - Training
 - Competitions
- New Business
- Action Plan
- Adjournment

For additional resources, templates of meetings, and guidance on how to run an effective meeting, please work with your Senior Manager of Area Services.



Section 3: Functions & Policies

To run efficiently, all Area Leadership Teams rely on several functions for success.

Registration & Data: Overview

Athletes

Special Olympics aims to create an inclusive environment for all athletes. While no athlete will be turned away based on financial need, there are required steps to become a Special Olympics athlete.

- Visit the [Special Olympics Washington Athlete Handbook](#) for more information.
- Special Olympics athletes must be at least 8-years-old and be a person who has been diagnosed with an intellectual disability, or a closely related developmental delay from a medical professional to compete. Children ages 2 to 7 years of age can train in the Young Athletes™ program. [See General Rules, Article 2: Special Olympics Athletes](#)
- Athletes must submit an [AFP](#) to Special Olympics. This health information form must be signed by a medical professional
 - AFPs are valid for three years from the medical exam date. AFP Consent Forms (page 5) do not have an expiration date.
- No athlete can be excluded due to lack of funds. [See General Rules, Article 3: Sports Training & Competition](#).

Unified Sports® Partners

Unified Sports partners follow a similar registration process as athletes. To become a Unified Sports partner, an individual must complete a Unified Partner Release Form. Unified Sports partners 18 years and older must also clear a WSP Background check.

Unified Release Forms do not have an expiration date. Please note, however, when a Unified Partner turns 18 years old, he/she will need to complete a new Unified Partner Release Form and sign it as an adult. WSP Clearance Forms are valid for three years from the clearance date.

Volunteers

All volunteers must register and receive approval by SOWA. The registration procedure and forms are important tools for ensuring the safety and well-being of all athletes and volunteers. In compliance with Special Olympics, Inc. policy, all U.S. Programs must register and classify volunteers.

Class A Volunteers

All volunteers must complete a Volunteer Class A Registration Form.

What qualifies as a Class A Volunteer? A Class A Volunteer:

- Has regular close, physical contact with athletes
- Is in positions of authority, trust, or supervision with athletes
- Handles cash or other assets of the Area Leadership Team
- Chaperones athletes and may stay overnight or transport athletes

Volunteers must complete the Class A Volunteer Application, Protective Behaviors, and General Orientation to Special Olympics training.

Volunteers must present a valid photo ID to be copied when the application form is turned in.



All volunteers must undergo a background check. A background check is completed by SOWA using a national vendor that consults a sex offender list. Motor vehicle checks are required of all Class A volunteers.

All volunteers must receive training and materials regarding their volunteer duties and expectations. SOWA may decide regarding the level of the volunteer's involvement based on the background check. SOWA will notify the volunteer and Area Leadership Team if they are unable to assist as a Class A Volunteer.

All volunteer information must be renewed every three years.

All volunteers are expected to follow the rules and standards set forth for volunteers under the direction of the Area Leadership Team Coordinator. Please note that for the safety of the athletes, coaches, and other volunteers all Class A volunteers will undergo the same screening process as Program Staff.

**Minors under the age of 18 do not need to complete Protective Behaviors Training. However, they do need to provide two, non-family references.*

***If under the age of 18, the volunteer does not have to complete a background check until their 18th birthday.*

Class B Volunteers

The qualifications for a Class B Volunteer differ from that of a Class A Volunteer. Class B Volunteers include volunteers who participate in one-day, day-of events, walk-on volunteers, or Healthy Athletes® volunteers. Class B Volunteers have more limited contact with athletes.

While Class B Volunteers have limited contact with athletes, a strict registration protocol must still be followed.

- Class B Volunteers must sign in and produce a valid photo ID on the day of the event for which they will be volunteering.
- When checking in as a Class B Volunteer, the volunteer must provide the following information:
 - Name
 - Complete Address
 - Phone Number
 - Group Affiliation (if any)

Youth Volunteer Policy

- Children 10 and under are not eligible to volunteer but are welcome to attend events as spectators. (Exception – Unified Partner participants may be 8 yrs. or older)
- Youth 11-13 are eligible to volunteer, for certain positions, if accompanied by parent/adult chaperone.
- Teens 14-17 are eligible to volunteer for certain positions.
- Youth groups need to provide a minimum of one adult chaperone for every four youth.
- Adults are defined as 18 years of age or older and anyone under 18 must have parent/guardian to participate.

Disqualifiers

To ensure the safety of Special Olympics athletes, Unified Sports® partners, and other volunteers,



Special Olympics is selective with its volunteers. While Special Olympics invites anyone interested in volunteering for an organization committed to a culture of teamwork and inclusion, there are several disqualifiers for potential volunteers.

Disqualifiers for Being a Volunteer Include:

- Child abuse
- Sexual abuse or sexual misconduct between a minor/adult
- Causing a child's death
- Neglect of a child or any other individual for whom the potential volunteer has held responsibility
- Kidnapping
- Manslaughter
- Felony arrest/prosecution
- Arson
- Criminal sexual conduct
- Driving while intoxicated (DWI), driving under the influence (DUI), or comparable offenses; or three or more moving violations within the past three years, disqualifies the volunteer from driving on behalf of Special Olympics for seven years

Submitting Volunteer Registration

For more information about Special Olympics Washington Volunteer program, please download the [Volunteer Handbook](#).

All Volunteer Registration Forms must be submitted before athlete training and competition begins.

Proof of Protective Behaviors, Special Olympics General Orientation training, and Background Check should also be on file prior to athlete training and competition. *

* In the United States, Special Olympics, Inc. requires that all Class A Volunteers complete the Special Olympics General Orientation PRIOR to commencing any volunteer activities with the Area Leadership Team. If one is serving as a Special Olympics coach, Concussion Training must also be completed.

General Statement

Special Olympics training and competition is open to every person with an intellectual disability who is at least 8 years of age and who registers to participate in Special Olympics as required by the General Rules.

Age Requirement

Individuals are eligible for training and competition at age 8, and there is no upper age limit for participation. Children ages 2 to 7 are eligible to participate in the Special Olympics Young Athletes™ program.

A local program may permit children who are at least 6 years old to participate in age-appropriate Special Olympics training programs, or in specific and age-appropriate cultural or social activities offered during a Special Olympics event. Such children may be recognized for their participation in such training or other non-competitive activities through certificates of participation, or through other types of recognition not associated with participation in Special Olympics competition. No child may participate in a Special Olympics competition (or be awarded medals or ribbons associated with



competition) prior to their 8th birthday.

Identifying a Person with an Intellectual Disability

A person is considered to have an intellectual disability for purposes of determining their eligibility to participate in Special Olympics if that person satisfies one of the following requirements:

- The person has been identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability as determined by their localities
- The person has an intellectual delay as determined by standardized measures, such as intelligent quotient (or IQ) testing, or other measures which are generally accepted within the professional community as being a reliable measurement of the existence of an intellectual delay
- The person has a closely related intellectual disability, meaning that the person has functional limitations in both general learning (such as IQ) and adaptive skills (such as in recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care)
- Persons whose functional limitations are based solely on a physical, behavioral, or emotional disability, or a specific learning or sensory disability, are not eligible to participate as Special Olympics athletes. However, these individuals may volunteer for Special Olympics or consider becoming a Unified Sports® partner.

Families

Families are a vital component of the Special Olympics movement. Area Family Support Networks both engage families in volunteering & sharing feedback as well as connect them to resources within & outside of SOWA programming.

The Area Leadership Team includes the Family Support Coordinator position, who focuses on the below goals:

- Creates & maintains the Area Family Support Network (contact list) through communication and outreach.
- Connect SOWA Families to other community resources
- Gather input and feedback about SOWA programming
- Organize social events and activities unique to your SOWA Area
- Ensure family members have access to important competition and event information
- Offer family hospitality at Area events with a sign-in to capture contact information.



Working with Agency/Provider Staff & Volunteers

Older athletes who participate in Special Olympics may live in group homes; small residential facilities in the general community, that ideally have six or fewer occupants, who are watched over by trained caregivers 24 hours per day. Turnover of group homes staff members is quite high for a variety of reasons, and you may find challenges communicating with staff due to turnover and other circumstances. Local programs need to establish the most effective means for communicating with group home staff, articulating expectations and needs for their support. Consider involving them in the local programs as coaches, volunteers, and Unified Sports partners. Local programs provide valuable sports training and competition opportunities for group home residents and it will be necessary to establish a relationship with the group home and agency provider staff.

Risk Management: Health & Safety

Safety in Special Olympics activities is vital to providing a positive atmosphere for our athletes and volunteers. Prudent and proactive risk management practices help ensure the safety and well-being of all participants. It is crucial that you become familiar with SOWA's Crisis and Emergency Plan and know who to contact in the event of an emergency.

Sports Training & Competition

Ensure the safety of athletes, Unified Sports partners, coaches, volunteers, and those cheering on the athletes by promoting safety during sports training and competition.

Incident Reporting

An Incident Report Form should be completed following all injuries or incidents. Other incidents may include property damage, abuse, theft, or incidents requiring law enforcement. This helps document injuries and incidents, which in some cases may speed up the activation of applicable insurances.

The Incident Report Form is a factual account and should be free of speculation or hearsay. It is best to leave the determination of potential liability to the claims professionals.

Following an injury or incident, forms should be promptly sent to SOWA for processing through the SO insurance carrier. Please contact your Area Manager to obtain the form or visit our website.

Insurance

General Liability

The Special Olympics General Liability policy protects insured Special Olympics organizations, athletes, and registered volunteers from third-party claims of bodily injury, property damage, and personal injury due to alleged negligence arising from the conduct by Special Olympics during a Special Olympics activity. The general liability policy has been endorsed to provide coverage for losses resulting from damage to property in the care, custody, or control of Special Olympics.

Automobile Liability

This policy provides protection to Special Olympics for liability claims arising as a direct result of the use of a non-owned or hired automobile. For coverage to be effective, the vehicle must be used for Special Olympics business with the permission of Special Olympics and driven by an employee or a registered volunteer of Special Olympics. In the event of an incident, Special Olympics Insurance acts as a secondary Insurance.

NOTE: If the injury is serious or results in death please also contact the Director of Communications,

Jaymelina Esmele, at (206) 578-3339.

*Please note that exclusions and additional terms apply to coverages. Please consult with SOWA for more information.

Communications & Marketing

Communication is key to the success of the Area team.

For communications on behalf of Special Olympics and/or the Area, please use this Special Olympics letterhead [here](#) or contact SOWA for the template.

Planned Communication / Engagement

Internal

What do you need to communicate?

- Practice schedules
- Competition dates
- Fundraising activities
- Training opportunities for athletes and coaches
- Travel details
- Celebrations
- Meetings

When do you communicate?

Area Leadership is responsible for communicating sports season information, including but not limited to coaches' packet and deadlines such as pre-season and final registration. At other times when there may not be upcoming events, consider communicating on an as-needed basis.

How do you communicate?

Consider that everyone has different preferences. Do not rely solely on one means of communication.

Some great ways to communicate information to others are:

- Email
- Text messaging
- Newsletters (print and/or digital)
- Private/moderated groups on Facebook with member/access control
- Social media*
- A phone tree

*Be mindful of the content posted to social media. Some information is only appropriate for members of closed groups, and not for the public.

Reminders:

- Keep your list current! Be sure to add new athletes, families, and volunteers when they join the Area. Delete those who are inactive.
- Keep your communication lively so that others will continue to be engaged. However, always maintain professionalism — remember that you are representing Special Olympics!

External

What stories should we pitch to local media?

- Overall education/awareness about the Area, including its needs and activities
- Upcoming competitions
- Results from competitions
- Athletes and/or coach profiles
- Volunteer recruitment needs
- Assistance with fundraising activities

What to communicate with fans, followers, and the public?

- Program news, activities, and ways to engage
- Achievements, milestones, and good news
- Athlete, coach, volunteer, and family profiles
- Volunteer opportunities
- Ways to support the Area Program financially – including donations, special events, and fundraisers
- Upcoming events

How to communicate with fans, followers, and the public?

- Social media
- Website
- Newsletters (print and/or digital)
- Emails
- Printed collateral – including fact sheets, brochures, posters, and flyers
- Town halls

Who is doing the talking?

Each Area should have prepared individuals qualified to speak to the media or public about Special Olympics. This should likely be the Area Director and/or the Social Media/Marketing Coordinator. Be sure to engage trained Special Olympics Global Messengers. If help is needed to prepare for media interviews or developing messaging for specific speaking engagements the Special Olympics Washington marketing and communications team can assist you.

All individuals speaking to the media or public should maintain clear, consistent messaging about the Area. As a reminder, please notify Special Olympics Washington if you secure a news related interview.

Language Guidelines

It is critical that appropriate terminology is used when speaking about a Special Olympics Area Program. This helps to educate the public while reinforcing the organization's brand.

View the Special Olympics Disability Language Guidelines [here](#).

Branding

Branding guidelines specific to Special Olympics Washington are in development. In the interim,



for branding guidance please refer to Special Olympics' [extensive branding guidelines](#), including sub-Program guidelines.

For questions regarding branding and logo usage, please contact our Director of Marketing and Communications Jaymelina Esmele at jesmele@sowa.org

Uniforms

Please note the following guidelines when ordering uniforms. Please also refer to the Sport's specific rules for further uniform requirements.

Commercial Messages on Athlete Uniforms and Competition Numbers

In order to avoid commercial exploitation of persons with intellectual disabilities – per the Special Olympics International General Rules – no uniforms, bibs, or other signs bearing competition numbers worn by Special Olympics athletes and Unified Sports® partners during any competition or during any opening or closing ceremonies of any games may be emblazoned with commercial names or commercial messages. The only commercial markings that may be displayed on athletes' uniforms during games, competitions, and opening and closing ceremonies are the normal commercial marking of the manufacturer.

In terms of Special Olympics uniforms, “normal commercial markings” are limited to the following:

- On larger clothing items – such as shirts, jackets, pants, jerseys, and sweatshirts – one logo or commercial name per clothing item is permitted if that name or display does not exceed an area of 6 square inches or about 39 square centimeters (such as a display measuring 2” x 3” of 5.08 cm X 7.62 cm):



- Please note that, in addition to commercial messages, each sport may have specific guidelines to the size and location of numbers and team names as indicated by each National Governing Body.
- On small clothing items – such as caps, socks, hats, gloves, and belts – one logo or commercial name per clothing item is permitted if that name or display does not exceed an area of 3 square inches in 19.35 square centimeters.
- On athletic shoes, no logos or commercial names are permitted except for the brand name and logo that are included in the manufacturer of athletic shoes that are sold to the public
- Please check the logo guidelines prior to ordering uniforms. If in doubt, contact the Special Olympics office; they will review artwork for compliance.

Branding for Team Uniforms and T-Shirts

Athlete Program Level Branding – No Sponsorship

Athlete t-shirts and/or uniforms should not carry any sponsorship branding. They can, however, be branded with the Special Olympics logo.

Lockup for Areas, Local Programs, Clubs, or Teams

When creating shirts for Area Leadership Teams, local programs, clubs, or teams, a lockup can be used that gives primacy to the actual team name. This acknowledges the importance of Area Leadership Teams within Special Olympics, Inc. and facilitates the creation of distinct identities for games within an Area.

If an Area would like a logo mockup created for their Area, please contact the Special Olympics Washington Marketing team.

Branding for Volunteer Apparel

In addition to banners and signs, logos on volunteer t-shirts are an appropriate and approved way to recognize Area sponsors and could be placed on sleeves and/or the back of the shirt. Highlight the official brand on the front of the shirt.

Above and below are examples of the Special Olympics brand in action with examples of lockups for Area Leadership Teams, local programs, clubs, or teams.





Sports: Training & Competition

As an Area Director or Leadership Team, it is important to understand the basics of sports training and competition. There are factors involved in getting athletes ready for competition and then taking them to competition.

Please note that prior to the beginning of training and attending competition, the following elements should be in place:

- Register with SOWA
- Head coach and assistant coaches trained and certified
 - WSP Background Check Cleared, General Orientation, and Protective Behaviors
 - Concussion Training
 - Attend Sports Specific training
 - Coaching Unified Sports (if coaching a Unified team)
 - For more info visit our [Coaches Webpage](#)
- Register your team / athletes for competition
 - Selection of sport(s) for competition
 - Submit a Pre-season registration form to Area Administrative Coordinator or Area Director
 - Submit Final Registration to Area Administrative Coordinator or Area Director
 - Out of season or new sport: submit a Registered Training Program Form (Request from Area Manager) to your Area Director / Area Leadership Team Sports Coordinator / Regional Sports Manager.
- [Athlete Medical & Consent Form](#) and [Unified Partner Release Forms](#)
 - Completed and on hand before each training
- Volunteer/coach recruitment and Class A Volunteer certification completed

Sports

Special Olympics offers something for everyone. In addition to the available Official Sports, Special Olympics offers Recognized Sports and the ability to get involved in locally popular sports.

Official sports

Special Olympics offers the following Official Sports. Not all may be offered by SOWA.

- **Spring Sports**
 - Athletics, Cycling, Powerlifting, Swimming, Soccer
- **Summer Sports**
 - Bocce, Golf, Softball, Tennis, Stand Up Paddle Boarding (SUP)
- **Fall Sports**
 - Flag Football, Bowling, Gymnastics, Unified Robotics, Volleyball
- **Winter Sports**

- Basketball, Alpine, Cross-Country, Snowboarding, Speed Skating, Figure Skating, Snowshoeing, Cheerleading
- **Demonstration Sports**
 - Ballroom Dancing, Equestrian

PLEASE NOTE:

- Local popular sports may require pre-approval from Special Olympics Washington if they have been determined by SOWA to be sports that might expose Special Olympics athletes to unreasonable risks to their health or safety.
- SOWA may not offer any training or competition in any sport which SOI has classified as a prohibited sport.
- Requests for permission to offer one of these sports must be accompanied by proposed rules and safety standards. SOI has classified the following sports as local popular sports that require pre-approval:
 - Combative sports
 - Martial arts (other than Judo)
 - Sledding sports
 - Motor sports
 - Aerial sports
 - Shooting
 - Archery
 - Rugby

Read Article 3: Sports Training and Competition in the Special Olympics General Rules [here](#).

Sports Rules

All rules are in the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules book, can be located on the SOI website [here](#).

Sports Resources can also be found on the Special Olympics Washington website [here](#).

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules govern all Special Olympics competitions. Special Olympics has developed these rules based upon International Federation and National Governing Body Rules for each sport.

Please refer to Sports Rules Article 1 (*link above*) for information pertaining to Codes of Conduct, Training Standards, Medical and Safety Requirements, Divisioning, Awards, Criteria for Advancement to Higher Levels of Competition, and Unified Sports®.

Unified Sports®

Visit [our website](#) to learn about the highly successful Unified Sports program in the community and schools across the state.

Unified Sports® is an inclusive sports program that includes Special Olympics athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and Unified Sports® partners (individuals without intellectual disabilities). Through shared sport training and competition, Unified Sports® promotes inclusion for individuals with and without intellectual disabilities.



Coaches are required to take the Coaching Unified Sports® Course, which is available free of charge online [here](#).

Unified Sports® Models/Styles of Play

Unified Sports® is identified in Article 1 of the Sports Rules as three inclusive models – Competitive, Player Development, and Recreational. Each of these models reflects a certain style of play and teammate composition, but what all three have in common is that they are inclusive. Coaches should consult with their Area and Special Olympics Programs regarding what Unified models are offered and at which events. It is also important to know that some Programs may use different terms in naming the three models or styles of play.

Unified Sports® Competitive Style

- All athletes and partners must have sport-specific skills and tactics to complete without modification of rules.
- Teams in this model may be eligible for advancement to Regional and World Games.
- Athletes and Unified Sports® partners in team sports must be of similar age and ability.
- Athletes and Unified Sports® partners in sports, such as golf, may have a greater variance in age and ability.

Unified Sports® Player Development Style

- Athletes and Unified Sports® partners are not required to be of similar abilities but must be of similar ages.
- Teammates of greater abilities serve as mentors to assist teammates of lower abilities in developing sport-specific skills and tactics.
- In certain sports, such as bocce, more age variation is allowed.
- Competition is available at this level.

Unified Sports® Recreation Style

- Consists of inclusive recreational sports opportunities for athletes and Unified Sports® partners, or other organizations as introductory one-day events, exhibitions, or demonstrations.
- There is no prescribed training, competition, and/or team composition requirements.
- Opportunities may take place in partnership with schools, sports clubs, and/or community programs.
- Physical education class activities and intramural sports may also fall into this category.

Sports Training & Practice

Requirements concerning Special Olympics training may be found in [Article 1, Section 3.05](#).

Minimum Standards

It is the goal of Special Olympics Washington to have all sports teams playing on an ongoing league format basis and for athletes participating in individual sports to compete in invitational competitions as often as possible leading up to a qualifying competition for a higher level.

The minimum standards for athletes desiring to compete in Special Olympics are based on Special



Olympics Inc. Sports Rules. All athletes must be trained in the sport before competing. Part of this training may include nutrition education and physical conditioning. Eight consecutive weeks are mandatory. However, for Regional or World Games, training is recommended twice a week for ten weeks. All athletes must have opportunities to compete during that time.

Levels of Competition

Athletes of all ability levels have an opportunity to advance to the next higher-level competition provided the sport and event are offered at the next level, from Area Games to World Games.

Criteria for Advancement

The criteria for advancement can be found on page 18 of the [Official Special Olympics Sports Rules](#).

Special Olympics staff, with assistance from the Games Organizing Committees, may establish quotas for the number of athletes and teams participating in Games.

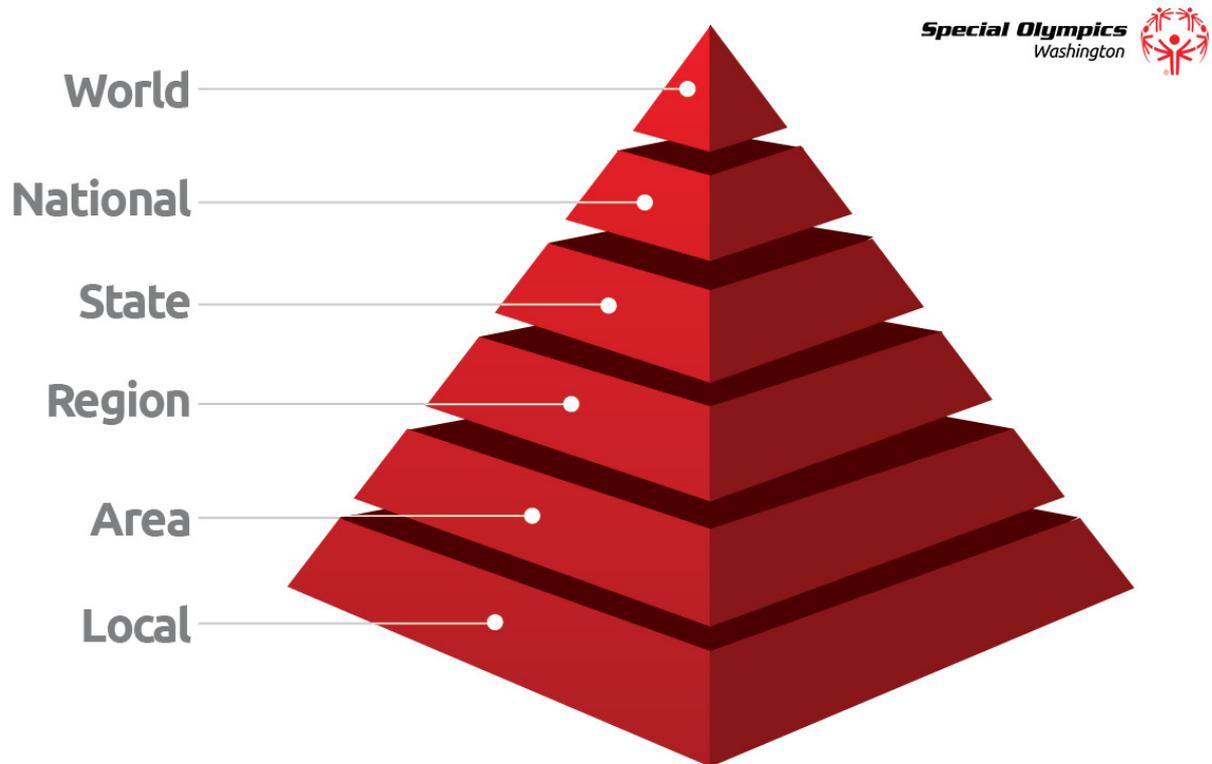
SOWA identifies the number of athletes or teams eligible for advancement within the sport/event based on participation in competition at the lower level. If the number of eligible athletes or teams does not exceed the quota, all athletes and teams may advance.

If the number of eligible athletes or teams does exceed the quota, athletes or teams that advance shall be selected as follows:

- Priority is given to first place finishers from all divisions of the sport/event.
- If the number of first place finishers exceeds the quota, select athletes or teams will advance by random draw.
- If there are not enough first place finishers to fill the quota, all first-place finishers shall advance.
- The remaining quota shall be filled by random draw of second place finishers from all divisions of the sport/event.
- This process is repeated – adding each place of finish as necessary – until the quota is filled.

These procedures apply to both individual and team sports, including Unified Sports®. The rules and processes to select athletes and teams to the next higher level of competition should be shared with all athletes, teams, families, and volunteers.

The Competition Continuum



Other Sport Opportunities

In addition to traditional sports competition between eligible athletes, Special Olympics provides a variety of competition opportunities for athletes of all abilities.

Motor Activities Training Program (MATP)

Participation for athletes with significant intellectual and/or physical disabilities who require the greatest assistance and support

- A non-competitive training program that is individualized for each athlete's existing skill level
- Preparation of athletes through sport-related activities appropriate for their abilities and age
- Recognition for participation and personal bests through MATP ribbons or medals

Individual Skills and Team Skills

- Athletes with lower ability can participate in team skills for team sports
- Athletes with lower ability can participate in individual sport skills

[Special Olympics Young Athletes™](#)

Young Athletes™ is a unique sport and play program for children with and without intellectual disabilities between the ages of 2 through 7. The focus is on fun activities that are important to gross



motor and social skill development. Children learn how to play with others and develop skills important to learning. Young Athletes programs can occur in schools as a Unified Champion School program run by teachers or other professionals, they can be run in the community by volunteer coaches, or they can be run at home by parents and siblings.

The benefits of the Young Athletes™ program are numerous and include (but are not limited to):

- Motor skill development
- Physical fitness
- Social, emotional, and learning skills
- Higher family expectations for the future
- Sports readiness
- Social inclusion and acceptance

Please contact our Initiatives Manager, Leah Shaffner at lshaffner@sowa.org for more information on this program!

Recruitment & Training

Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of Special Olympics. The thoughtful recruitment, coordination, and retention of volunteers is critical. This process includes a several important tasks, such as recruiting, matching skills to roles, arranging appropriate training for volunteers, and acknowledging their contributions. Important skill sets for a volunteer Area Leadership Team Coordinator include good organizational, interpersonal, and communication skills. The objective is to recruit, train, organize, recognize, and retain volunteers.

Action Steps for Volunteer Management

- Obtain a list of roles, qualifications, and time needed for volunteers regarding specific activities
- Maintain position descriptions for volunteers and include training duties
- Appoint a volunteer committee to assist with recruiting and training
- Follow up with referrals from SOWA or local volunteer agencies in a timely manner
- Hold interviews as necessary for potential volunteers to determine interests and skills
- Work with the Volunteer Coordinator and Leadership Team to assign volunteers to appropriate positions
- Arrange in-service training for volunteers as necessary
- Provide a way for volunteers to offer feedback about their experience
- Ensure that volunteers are properly supervised at events
- Ensure that all volunteers complete the appropriate volunteer registration forms
- Create and maintain a current volunteer database utilizing TRS.
- Ensure that thank you letters, appreciation notes, or activities are provided to thank volunteers

Volunteer Expectations

- Complete the required volunteer registrations forms and trainings
- Fulfill the responsibilities of your assignment
- Set a good example for the athletes



- Model good sportsmanship and behavior
- Be continually vigilant and aware of the safety of the athletes
- Be loyal to your commitment to SOWA
- Grow, learn, and challenge yourself through your involvement with Special Olympics
- Utilize TRS (The Registration System), the statewide volunteer recruitment and tracking system

Increasing Volunteers

There are several steps Area Leadership Team Coordinators and committee members should take to increase the number of volunteers. Below are some tips to increase volunteer efforts:

- Determine needs and skills required
- Establish programs based on athlete numbers and opportunities athletes would like
- Advertise volunteer needs for local events through social media, internet, and volunteer databases
- Advertise coach needs as sports develop
- Identify crucial roles within Area Leadership Teams and Games management teams that need to be filled

Where are potential targets for volunteers?

- College volunteer centers
- Sports organizations
- Sports leagues
- Community volunteer centers
- Sponsor volunteers
- High schools
- Families
- Service groups

How do I target these groups? How do I recruit them?

- Ensure that all recruitment efforts have a clear message and follow-up plan.
- Consider the following questions:
 - What is the time commitment?
 - What skills are required?
 - How does the volunteer follow-up if interested?
- Partner with sponsors to offer high-level volunteer roles for day events, such as venue managers
- Research local businesses that may offer employee volunteer hours and donate to charities based on hours served by employees
- Develop volunteer appreciation acknowledgements to maintain the volunteer base
- Invite volunteers to serve on Leadership Teams and utilize their talents to grow your Area Leadership Team

Area Leadership Team Training

As Leadership Teams are recruited, Senior Area Services Managers will work with Area Directors to help train and prepare new members for their role on the team. Training can include any online training or webinars and/or in –person orientation. If you need help recruiting new team members,



please let your Area Services Manager know so they can assist you in this process. Once a person has been identified, you can work with your Area Services Manager to create unique trainings depending on the role.

- Senior Area Services Managers
 - East-Luke Wall, Lwall@sowa.org
 - West-Alysanne Stack, Astack@sowa.org

Coaches

Having a well-trained team of coaches is critical to the success of Special Olympics and Area Leadership Teams, as well as ensuring the happiness and success of athletes. If you have specific questions for Riley, contact him at RStockton@sowa.org.

There are several targeting sources for Special Olympics coaches:

- Sports organizations
- Sports leagues
- Colleges and universities – including their athletic departments, sororities and fraternities, academic departments, and/or residential halls
- Service groups
- Local officials' associations
- Adaptive Physical Education and Physical Education teachers
- Special Education and General Education teachers
- Former coaches at elementary, middle school/junior high, and high school levels
- College students in Special Education programs
- Partnerships with colleges, youth sports organizations, and professional clubs

Types of Special Olympics Volunteer Coach Roles

There are several roles for a volunteer who wishes to become involved in Special Olympics sports as a **certified** Sports Volunteer/Coach. While some coaches may choose to remain a Sports Volunteer, other coaches may strive to increase their level of certification. Coaches who wish to increase their coaching level can follow the recommended SOWA Coach Education System outlined below.

- Certified Coach
- Assistant Coach, Team Manager
- Sports Volunteer (team manager, equipment manager, practice volunteer, chaperone)

Certified Coach

Certified coaches must complete the following

- Clear a WSP Background Check
- Complete the General Orientation Quiz & Protective Behaviors Quiz
- Complete online Concussion Course
- Complete an onsite Sport Specific Training
- Complete Coaching Unified Sports Course (Only if Unified Coach)
- Continuing Education: Complete an authorized training once a year.

Sport Volunteer, Team Manager, Assistant Coach



- Clear a Background Check
- Complete General Orientation / Protective Behaviors Training

Courses for Continuing Education

To maintain certification, a coach must complete an approved continuing education course once a year. Find more information [here](#) or contact Riley Stockton for more information at RStockton@sowa.org:

Retaining Coaches

Retaining coaches is critical. Coaches build trust and relationships with athletes, Unified Sports® partners, volunteers, and families. There are several ways to retain coaches and build a stronger Special Olympics community.

- Provide an initial meeting to review coaching role.
- Provide ongoing training opportunities.
- Empower the coach to be the leader of their team.
- Ensure effective communication prior to and throughout the season. Offer the opportunity to debrief after the season in preparation for the next year.
- Provide recognition at every level of coach certification.
- Establish your own Coach of the Year Award; submit entry to Special Olympics North America Coach of the Year Program.
- Identify coach needs through an Input Council and various communication pathways.
- Incentivize continued education (advancement to higher competition) to include, but not limited to, being selected to coach at a National, Regional, or World Games.
- Invite coaches to participate in other events throughout the year.

Athlete Growth

Special Olympics programs and opportunities are always growing. It is important to reach as many athletes as possible to help maintain growth. Below are several tips to assist with outreach to new and current athletes.

Create Links to Local Groups & Agencies Serving Individuals with Disabilities

- Partner with Parks and Recreation Departments for opportunities to include individuals with intellectual disabilities in their current Programs. Connect links between Special Olympics and Parks and Recreation websites for more information on how to get involved.
- Connect with all agencies and community services – such as group homes, the Arc, etc. – to bring in older athletes or maintain current athlete base as they age out of school.

Advertise Locally & Utilize Social Media

- Create website and social media accounts. Some social media platforms to consider are Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Please work with your Area Services Manager to set up SOWA recognized accounts.
- Advertise upcoming events and include information such as how to join, how to volunteer, and how to donate.
- Area Leadership Teams can use relevant hashtags in their social media posts.
- Abide by any program established policies.

Target Local Schools



- Connect with the Director of Unified Schools, Morgan Larche (MLarche@sowa.org) and the Area Unified Schools Coordinators to see who is participating in your Area and how you can get connected with local coaches and teams
- Work with Area Unified Schools Coordinator to Introduce the Unified Champion Schools program, which is a comprehensive model implemented in the U.S. that combines Unified Sports, Inclusive Youth Leadership, and Whole School Engagement to create school and community climates of acceptance and inclusion. This can begin as early as preschool with Young Athletes, and continue throughout elementary, middle, and high school with Unified Sports and/or related sports and leadership opportunities.
- Work with local independent school districts, Special Education Directors, or Athletic Directors. Partner with them to add Special Olympics opportunities to the school day or as a part of after-school programs with a focus on the middle schools.
- Speak at parent meetings and/or teacher professional development days
- Provide Special Olympics and Unified Sports information to students and their families through newsletters and brochures.

Target Young Athletes™

- Partner with local groups that involve people with intellectual disabilities, such as The Arc and Head Start. Present information about the Young Athlete program at their meetings, in their newsletters, etc.
- Target inclusive preschools and share information as to how they can incorporate the program during the day and encourage teachers to become coaches. Showcase athlete talents at a Young Athletes festival.
- Offer a Young Athlete Festival at Local Games and invite the public. To attract new families, incorporate Healthy Athletes opportunities that begin with a Healthy Athletes screening.
- Please contact our Initiatives Manager, Leah Shaffner at lshaffner@sowa.org for more information on this program!

Engage Local College Recreation Departments with Special Olympics College

Special Olympics College (SO College) Clubs function as an official club on campus. SO College Clubs connect college students and individuals with intellectual disabilities through sport to build friendships and help lead the social justice movement of Special Olympics.

- Special Olympics College Club programs are made up of three core elements: Unified Sports, Youth Leadership, and opportunities for Full Campus Engagement.
- Please contact Morgan Larche at mlarche@sowa.org for more information.

Athlete Leadership in Action

As SOWA staff, volunteers, and families we aim to remember the motto “Nothing About Us Without Us” and lead alongside people of all abilities, including those that compete with SOWA.

Athlete Leadership is the belief that all athletes can volunteer in addition to competing and help lead the movement in a variety of ways. An Athlete Leadership Coordinator and an Athlete Representative on your Area Leadership Team help grow Athlete Leadership by:

- Ensuring athletes are aware of leadership & volunteer opportunities



- Provide awareness & education to volunteers, families, and staff about the importance of co-leading alongside athletes and tips on being inclusive
- Connect athletes to training and supports, if necessary. SOWA staff train Athlete Leadership Coordinators to deliver a variety of workshops geared toward athletes or any other volunteer interested in pursuing leadership opportunities such as:
 - Serving as an Ambassador (Public Speaking & Networking)
 - Governance preparation for service on Board of Directors or Athlete Input Council
 - Volunteering at events
 - Coaching, Assistant Coaching, or Captaining
 - And more!

Each Area should also have at least one Athlete Input Council (AIC) of 5 – 8 athletes with a volunteer facilitator which meets monthly. Each council elects a representative to the Area Leadership team. Before each meeting athletes get input from other athletes in the Area and share their ideas at each meeting. The council then selects the top three items of feedback to pass on to the State Input Council and to the Area Director. Area Directors review these suggestions for improvement and then provide feedback to their council before the next meeting. When considering changes to SOWA programs, the AICs are a great source of feedback before decisions are finalized. [Athlete Leadership Resources.](#)

Workshops for Athlete Leaders

- Introduction to Athlete Leadership
- Governance for Input Councils
- Ambassador I (basic public speaking)
- Ambassador II (refining basic skills)

Please contact our Initiatives Manager, Leah Shaffner at lshaffner@sowa.org for more information on this program!

Transportation

Transportation is vital to getting our athletes from 'A to B'. We have many different program sizes and needs, so please be sure to work with your Area Manager when reserving transportation to ensure we get the best quality and price.

Please follow the policies and guidelines below to ensure you know what it required:

- Transportation requests are required for all transportation to any Special Olympics Washington event. Special Olympics Washington covers the cost of transportation to both Region and State games. Local transportation to practice or other events the responsibility of the local program, team and/or Area.
- Our preferred vendor for rental vans and cars is Enterprise Rent-a-Car. If Enterprise is unavailable in the Area you are being transported from, please note that on your transportation request as well as work with your Area Manager to ensure it can be approved.
- Charter buses are conditional and will only be approved for extreme or necessary situations. If your transportation request is denied because the distance is too short for the type of transport requested, the program can upgrade and pay the difference of the originally requested transport if they have the funds.
 - Be advised that participant numbers should be 30 or more to request a bus unless you have a special circumstance. Work with your Area Manager if you feel you



should receive accommodation for participant numbers less than this.

- If your charter or school bus is approved via the transportation request, drivers will be included in state games housing and should be submitted with housing paperwork provided to you during the registration process. If you anticipate needing a bus, please plan and include your bus driver

If you use your personal vehicle as a means of transportation to region or state, you can be reimbursed only if you provide receipts for gas and your transportation request had prior approval.

Fundraising

Fans and funds are the fuel that service the mission of Special Olympics. Local Programs fundraise to create sustainable programs and encourage quality growth. Money raised by the Area Team and programs stay within the community, helping to cover the costs of the local budget.

Finances are needed to effectively run a sports training program for Special Olympics athletes, and these dollars can come from a variety of sources. When considering a fundraiser, teams are encouraged to work by a 70% revenue to 30% expense ratio as a baseline.

Please note that local and Area programs are not allowed to fundraise via direct mail. Special Olympics Washington and Special Olympics, Inc. are contractually obligated to enforce this policy throughout Washington. In addition, before contacting any businesses or organizations, please contact your Area Director to avoid potential donor duplication and review Protected Contracts in the Fundraising Handbook.

Important Reminders

- Review the [Fundraising Handbook](#) for all policies and information related to area and team fundraising.
- All fundraising events **must be approved prior** to any marketing. Please use the [Team Fundraising Form](#) online to submit your event for approval.
- Money solicitation to be used by teams and areas must be collected in the Special Olympics Washington name. **Checks cannot be made out to volunteers or athletes, or other third parties.**
- All money collected is required to be turned to the SOWA office in within the same season it was collected. **Checks dated over 3 months may not be cashed.** It is important to respect donors and not hold on to checks as the donor's finances can change.
- All **cash should be converted into a cashier's check** before mailing to SOWA.
- When submitting funds, please include a copy of the [Area Donation Submission Receipt](#). Please keep a copy for your records. If you are sending athlete envelopes, please also include the [Team Roster Form](#). **Team Roster Form is required for athletes to receive credit towards incentives. (page 15).**
- All money can be sent to **Special Olympics Washington, 2815 2nd Avenue, Suite 370, Seattle, WA 98121**. Remember to include the Area Donation Submission Receipt or Team Envelope Roster Form for proper allocation of funds.

For ideas on how to fundraise, sample business solicitation requests, information about online or Facebook fundraising, or our athlete fundraising incentive program please refer to our [Fundraising Handbook](#).

Questions regarding fundraising? Please contact our Development Manager, Grants, Foundations, Areas, Donna Lindsay at dlindsay@sowa.org or call 206-456-0201.



Finance

Accounting for all funds raised and used by your Area Leadership Team is important to protect the credibility of the Special Olympics brand, as well as to ensure compliance with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in the United States (or comparable agency in your country) as a tax-exempt charitable not-for-profit organization.

Oversee & Manage Financial Resources

The following steps should be taken to ensure that the Area Leadership Team's financial resources are managed appropriately:

Identify Finance Coordinator to manage finances.

Recruit someone who is knowledgeable about managing a budget and who has some understanding of finances. The volunteer will be the person who helps to establish the budget each year, review monthly reports and works hand in hand with fundraising to establish amounts required to meet program expenses.

Create annual revenue and expense budgets.

Budget what Program activities, training, and competitions your Area Leadership Team plans to engage in, and then manage within those parameters. Prepare budgets by consulting the Area Leadership Team regarding intended goals, budget expenses, and revenue based on prior performance. Budgets are typically prepared during the third or fourth quarter of the current year for the following year and will be reviewed and approved by SOWA prior to implementation.

Review monthly financial reports

SOWA will send out a year to date PL ("Profit/Loss") statement as compared to budget. Included in this monthly report will be all expenses and deposits made for the time period. The Finance Coordinator should review these reports for accuracy based on events going on in their area. Any changes or questions can be directed to the Area Services Manager at the state office.

Financial Policies

- Area Leadership Teams and Local Programs are not permitted to open credit cards, debit cards, bank savings or checking accounts, certificates of deposits (CDs), general investments, or endowments.
- Personal expenses are not permitted from area funds under any circumstances
- **Capital equipment purchases** for non-disposable equipment, or items valued at \$1,000.00 or more, are considered fixed assets and the property of the SOWA. Purchase and disposal or sale of fixed assets must be pre-approved by SOWA's office. Annually, all equipment must be inventoried and reported to SOWA's office.
- **Restricted funds** are funds that are raised for a particular purpose that are *not* budgeted for. An example could be a team who wants to fundraise specifically for new uniforms. The Finance Coordinator must let the State Office know if any funds for deposit Restricted Funds are. If designation is not made, then funds will be recorded to the area as unrestricted to help pay for budgeted expenses.
- **Petty Cash** will be distributed to Areas who qualify and request funds. Petty cash will be issued up to \$500 and must be reconciled by the 5th of each month for processing. Only Area Directors and Finance Coordinators are authorized to handle and manage petty cash for the Area. Please refer to the petty cash procedure and forms. If you



need assistance locating these documents, please contact your Area Manager.

- **Deposit Banking**—each Area will be provided with procedures to follow to appropriately deposit funds into their local Wells Fargo Bank. A Special Olympics deposit only account number will be provided to 1-2 Area Leadership Team members. Within 24 hours of an event or fundraiser, representatives should deposit CASH ONLY to the local Wells Fargo. No checks. Please provide the deposit slip, as well as the ‘Area Donation Form’ detailing who the funds are to be directed to. The **event date** must be used on the deposit slip as well as the Area donation form so that Special Olympics Washington can track and match cash that is deposited. If you do not put the correct date, you may not receive those funds.

Additional Consideration

- All deposits will be made at the state office and recorded to the area budget
- Checks should only be made out to Special Olympics Washington
- Please do not send in cash. Cash should be sent in via a cashier’s check or via the deposit banking policy listed above
- Clearly identify what the deposit is for (i.e. fundraising event, donation, etc.), and what area you want it reported in
- Acknowledgement of donations will be done by the state office within 30 days of receiving funds. Cash donations will not be acknowledged unless detail of who donated and amounts are provided by the Finance Coordinator.

Expenses

- Expenses must be pre-approved through the Finance Coordinator and/or Area Director PRIOR TO any expenses being incurred by a volunteer.
- Approvals can be issued by using a Purchase Order form (“PO”) for material expenses.
- Non-material expenses such as volunteer reimbursements need to be approved by the Area Director or Finance Coordinator.
- Any reimbursements need to have the original receipts attached and if mileage is being charged to the area, the starting and ending odometer reading OR a Google Maps (or equivalent) showing total miles to and from the place of travel.
- It is the responsibility of the Area Leadership Team to make sure volunteers are aware of the expense process. SOWA will not be responsible for expenses that are incurred without the proper approval.

Code of Conduct Violation or Suspension

When considering suspending an athlete, unified partner or coach, Areas may ‘recommend’ suspension to the state office of Special Olympics Washington. Documentation and witness accounts will be required when submitting a suspension for review. **It is recommended to consult your Area Services Manager in any potential suspension situation.**

Refer to ‘Codes of Conduct’ for athletes/partners/coaches. Note: Special Olympics Washington has the right to suspend any participant based on circumstances presented. If you feel you have an extreme case that warrants immediate suspension, please contact your Area Services Manger directly.



Each program should be aware of the athlete/partner/coach 'Code of Conduct' to ensure behavior is in line with Special Olympics standard of behavior for participation. If the athlete/partner/coach is not aware of the conduct code present them with a copy for review as a first warning.

Suspension' is defined as no participation with Special Olympics Washington in any form. The suspended is not to attend any Special Olympics Washington events as a volunteer or spectator, this includes practices, competitions, fundraising events, etc.

The **'Suspension Checklist'** form is required documentation in recommending suspension at the Area level (receive or request from Area Services Manager). Head Coach and/or program coordinator is required to complete form and submit to Area Director or Leadership team member responsible for processing suspensions. The same form should be used to document progression of behavior/situation.

Verbal warnings can be issued by the head coach or program coordinator.

Written warnings can be issued by program coordinator only after Area Director has been notified and approved (required 'Suspension Checklist' form to Area Director for approval). The suspension checklist form will function as the written warning template to be issued to participant in question.

In-person meetings should include participant, coach/program coordinator and Area Director and/or Special Olympics Washington staff (Area Services Manager or Director). An in-person meeting should never be conducted as a 1v1 meeting, but with an additional witness. The Area Director or Special Olympics Washington staff are required participants in this meeting.

Here are the steps to follow when managing athlete/partner/coach behavior. Please keep documentation/file of actions taken below:

- Verbal warning given to the athlete/partner/coach
- Written warning given to the athlete/partner/coach with a copy to the State office and parent/guardian/caseworker. 'Suspension Checklist' form must be completed by Head Coach/Program Coordinator and provided to Area Director for approval.
- Personal meeting with the athlete/partner/coach to review unacceptable behavior and work out a plan for improvement. Existing 'Suspension Checklist' form must be used to document next steps.
 - If the athlete is under 18, or over 18 and not their own guardian, he/she will be accompanied by his/her parent/guardian or caseworker. If the athlete is over 18 and is his/her own guardian, he/she may choose to have another adult present.

The meeting will be documented in writing and copies distributed to the athlete/partner/coach State office, and parent/guardian or caseworker.

If the behavior continues and a temporary or permanent suspension is being considered, follow these steps:

- Any further action must be referred to the Area Services Manager. Please provide the following information when submitting a suspension for review:
 - Copy of completed suspension checklist
 - Written summary of situation that includes all steps taken to correct behavior of athlete/volunteer
 - Written testimonials from any witness to the behavior (minimum 2)
 - Incident report, if relevant

Further action could be, but is not limited to:



- Suspension for more than one sport season
- Expulsion for one year or more
- Permanent expulsion

Appeal Process

The athlete/partner/coach has the right to appeal any disciplinary actions with the State office. The athlete/partner/coach must submit a written request for appeal within 14 days of being notified of the disciplinary action.

SOWA will review the request and determine whether to uphold the recommendation of the Area or hold an appeal meeting to obtain additional information. If deemed necessary, the appeal will be heard by a SOWA staff representative. A decision to reverse, amend or affirm a disciplinary action will be submitted in writing to the Area and should include a plan of action for the athlete/volunteer to correct the unacceptable behavior that led to the disciplinary action.

Issues After Suspension

If after a suspension has been imposed the participant shows up at any sanctioned Special Olympics event, continues to contact athletes or other participants in the program or harasses individuals involved with Special Olympics please notify your Area Manager immediately. Special Olympics Washington will act as this continued behavior is unacceptable and puts our program at risk.

Re-Entering the Special Olympics Program

All decisions concerning re-entry to the program must be reviewed and approved by the SOWA CEO or his/her designee.

When being considered for re-entry into Special Olympics program the athlete/partner/coach is automatically placed on a 1-year probation. Upon readmittance, the Area Leadership Team will provide a conditional list of a behaviors that the athlete/partner/coach must follow to continue in the program. If the athlete/partner/coach breaks terms laid out in the agreement, the Area Leadership Team may recommend additional restrictions. If improvement in behavior is not achieved, Area Leadership Team is able to re-submit for permanent suspension from SOWA.

Please contact your Area Services Manager with any questions or concerns regarding suspension.

Part 2: Further Developing Your Area

Section 1: How to Grow & Sustain Your Area

Planning for Growth

As an Area grows, it will have to evolve to serve athletes in a quality manner. The goal of all programs is that growth be tied to athlete demand and interest. As more athletes join local programs, more sport opportunities will need to be added, practice facilities will need to be larger, the budget will have to increase, and the coach and volunteer base will need to grow. For this reason, it is better to plan for growth when launching an Area Leadership Team to best accommodate the Area's needs as they are discovered.

Enhancing Existing Sports

Consider adding additional training opportunities and sports performance standards to the Area to encourage increased performance. Expand the programs from just one skill-focused training session per week by adding a second training session focused on fitness and conditioning. Focusing on health to enhance the existing sports programs will assist your athletes in their health and well-being. It is a global initiative of Special Olympics for all athletes to participate in 2 high quality sports opportunities per week.

Adding Unified Sports® Options to Already Existing Sports

By partnering with schools, churches, or other community organizations, the Area Leadership Team can grow by giving volunteers the option of becoming Unified Sports® partners to train and compete alongside Special Olympics athletes.

Adding New Sports

To better gauge the popularity of the sports offered by your local programs and SOWA, regularly surveying the athletes, coaches, Area Leadership Teams, and families is encouraged to obtain the best information and feedback.

To make effective decisions in adding a new sport or Program, the following need to be taken into consideration:

Interest

- Determine community interest by hosting a sports demonstration for local athletes, Unified Sports® partners, and coaches. Introduce basic sports skills and determine the community's interest for adding a program or sport
- Brochures within schools, community boards, group homes, and other areas that serve individuals with intellectual disabilities are helpful for increasing awareness and determining interest

Facilities

- Partner with local recreation centers, high schools, and sports organizations to obtain access to facilities used for training and competition



Coaches

- Host a volunteer orientation for all new volunteers and introduce coaching opportunities
- Recruit and strategically place coaches where they will best fit

Other Volunteers

- Host or participate in volunteer fairs and trainings within targeted communities to create interest for the local program's needs
- Create a volunteer job description for each available position to provide specific requirements and job functions for volunteers

Budget

- When determining the Area program's needs, be sure that the budget provides information about how much revenue the Area Leadership Team and local programs will need to sustain and/or grow
- All funds must be raised through a collaboration between the Area Leadership Team and local programs— either through fundraising or donations
- Collaboration with SOWA will help determine the Area Leadership Team's budget and ensure that the Area is staying within the parameters of the organization

Determining What Opportunities to Offer

The following opportunities may be added based on your Area's capacity and specific needs, along with endorsement from SOWA.

Young Athletes™

Young Athletes™ is for kids with and without disabilities ages 2-7. The curriculum and activity guide were developed by physical therapists and run for 8 weeks with 3 thirty-minute sessions each week. The curriculum and activity guide can be modified for a variety of settings and schedules.

It introduces motor skills and basic sports skills to prepare athletes and partners for sports programming of training and competition at age 8.

Young Athletes can be run by families in their home, volunteers at local community locations, or by teachers during PE or therapy time at school.

Please contact our Initiatives Manager, Leah Shaffner at lshaffner@sowa.org for more information on this program!

Click [here](#) for more Young Athlete Resources!

Unified Champion Schools

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools include Unified Sports and inclusive activities which enhance the youth experience and empower students to become agents of change in their communities. This program is a catalyst for promoting inclusion by bringing together students with and without intellectual disabilities in a variety of activities.



The three components of a Unified Champion School are:

- Inclusive Sports Opportunities (Unified Sports®)
- Inclusive Youth Leadership and Advocacy
- Whole School Engagement

[Unified Champion Schools Resources](#)

Inclusive Youth Leadership

Inclusive youth leadership (IYL) is when young people (school-age) of all abilities are given opportunities to be leaders in their schools and communities. These leadership activities help students find their voices and teach them to become change agents in their communities by promoting equity and acceptance. Social inclusion is best fostered when activities within the classroom, school, and community are designed and implemented by a diverse group of students within a school. These leaders support SOWA and develop their leadership skills through event participation, volunteer opportunities, and fundraising.

Inclusive Youth Leadership focuses on promoting social inclusion by educating, motivating, and activating youth to become agents of change in their communities and advocate for the respect, inclusion, and acceptance of all people, regardless of abilities.

IYL can take many different forms depending on the culture of your Area Leadership Teams:

- **Area Youth Activation Committees (Area YAC):** Students from schools in your [Area](#) join together to learn about Unified Sports and Inclusive Youth Leadership, while having fun and discussing ways to increase school inclusion in all schools and the community.
- **State Youth Activation Committee (State YAC):** The State Youth Activation Committee (YAC) is about activating youth to promote school communities where all young people are agents of change – fostering respect, dignity and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities. Most importantly the goal is to be advocates for inclusion and HAVE FUN doing it! State YAC members develop strategies, lead initiatives, and organize events that promote the respect, inclusion, and acceptance of all people, regardless of abilities. The State Youth Activation Committee is a committee of YAC members representing schools from across the state.

Inclusive Youth Leadership Information:

- http://www.specialolympics.org/Sections/What_We_Do/Unified_Champion_Schools_Inclusive_Youth_Leadership.aspx
- <http://specialolympicswashington.org/unified/inclusive-youth-leadership/>

[Healthy Communities®](#)

Healthy Communities serves to raise awareness around the issue of health disparities facing people with ID, foster development focused on delivering care to people with ID, and ultimately create communities where Special Olympics athletes and others with ID have the same access to health and wellness resources and can attain the same level of good health as others. Examples of local Healthy Community Projects may include, but are not limited, to:



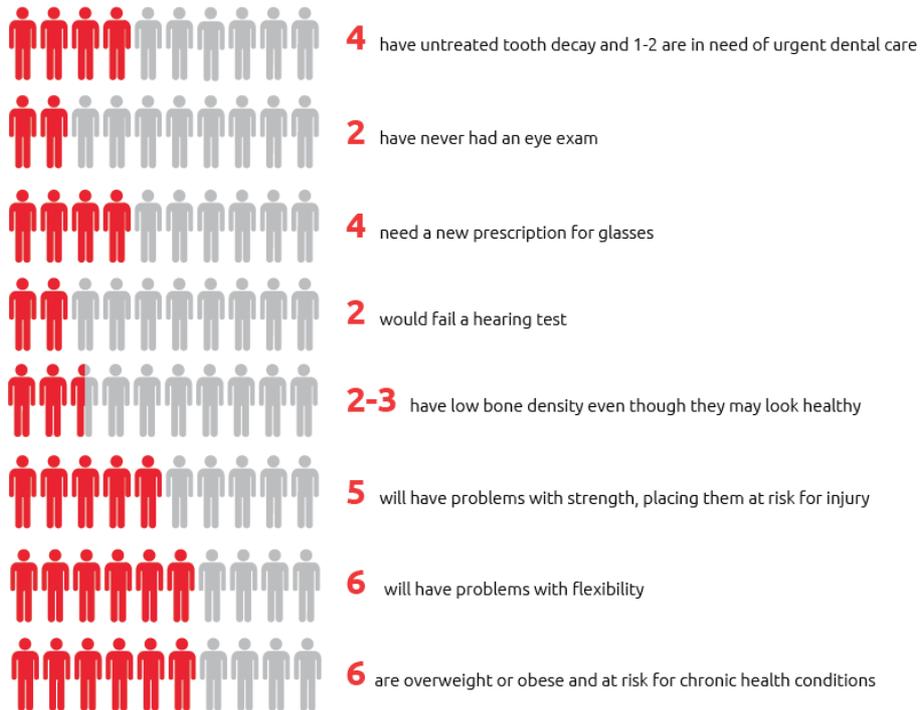
- [Fit 5](#) – based on the three simple goals of exercising 5 days per week, eating 5 total fruits and vegetables per day, and drinking 5 water bottles of water per day. Fit 5 provides tips and information to lead a healthy lifestyle through physical activity, nutrition, and hydration.
- [SOfit](#) – a Unified approach to wellness, which pairs athletes with a Unified Partner, with the primary goal of the program being to guide, educate and encourage athletes and partners to maintain a healthy lifestyle through increased physical activity and improved daily nutrition.
- [Unified Fitness Clubs](#) – a year-round, Unified club that provides fitness, sport, and wellness opportunities to athletes and partners to improve their health
- [Family Health Forums](#) – designed to engage families of those with ID in Special Olympics and offer an environment where parents and caregivers can gain direct access to health information, resources, and support.
- [Performance Stations](#) – events held near the field of play at tournaments or Games that prepare athletes to compete to their personal best and make the connection between fitness and athletic performance.
- [Health Messengers](#) – are Special Olympics athletes who have been trained to serve as health and wellness leaders, educators, advocates and role models within their Special Olympics community and community at large.

By promoting a healthy lifestyle with fitness and overall wellness components, you can ensure that your Area Leadership Team is equipped to make healthy choices beyond the sport and competition realm. Contact Della Norton, Director of Health at dnorton@sowa.org to implement a Healthy Communities program in your area.

Health and Fitness in Washington

Despite severe need and higher health risks, people with ID are often denied health services and die on average 16 years sooner than the general population. SOWA's goal is to improve access to quality health care for the athletes in Washington, so they can take full advantage of the same health programs and services available to people who do not have ID. When people with ID have access to health services, they also have more opportunities for education, employment, sports, and other pathways to reach their highest quality of life.

Did you know that on one team of SOWA Athletes...



Healthy Athletes®

Healthy Athletes is Special Olympics program that provides free health screenings and health education in a fun, welcoming environment with a focus on removing the anxiety people with intellectual disabilities often experience when faced with a visit to a medical professional. Healthy Athletes is not only a program for athletes but, through training and hands-on experience at screenings, it is a program for health care students and professionals to increase knowledge of best practices in caring for people with intellectual disabilities. Healthy Athletes is implemented by your state program, Clinical Directors, and medical volunteers at state and regional competitions.





Section 2: Developing local Partnerships

What is a successful partnership approach for Area Program development?

Throughout North America, Area Leadership teams are forging partnerships in their communities in creative and exciting ways. The following information is provided to help you get started with creating your own partnerships with sponsors, volunteers, clubs and organizations, athletes, and others in your community.

Partnerships with Community Organizations

Partnering with existing organizations in your community is a great way to make use of resources who already provide support for people with intellectual disabilities. Groups like **The ARC, Parks and Recreation, YMCA, and other non-profits** are great partnerships to start in your Area. Many local businesses also have job training programs, so be sure to do the research and take advantage of these resources.

Partnerships with Families

Engaging families in any of the diverse roles in Special Olympics will strengthen your Area Programs. Family Support Coordinators will help connect families to your Area and to partner organizations. Please contact our Initiatives Manager, Leah Shaffner at lshaffner@sowa.org for more information on this program!

Protected Contacts

Protected Contacts list has been created to help improve communication and coordination and will be updated annually. Please respect the following existing relationships by contacting the State Office before contacting the sponsor. By working together at all levels, we can best honor donor intent and receive the maximum potential gifts for our efforts. Please refer to the [Fundraising Handbook](#) for the full list.

Learn, practice, and improve. Partnerships propel the Program.





Section 3: Using Technology

Technology enables an Area Leadership Team to work smarter, more efficiently, and more effectively.

Communications & Marketing

Social Media

Social media can be a powerful and cost-effective way to reach a broad audience.

What is Social Media?

Social Media refers to websites and applications that are designed to allow people to share content quickly, efficiently and in real-time. It is a powerful tool for reaching and engaging with various audiences including current and potential athletes, coaches, donors, parents, volunteers, and the public. Information shared on social media includes text posts, photos, video, and graphics. Popular social media platforms include Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, TikTok, Snapchat and more.

Social Media Guidelines

- The notion of privacy in social media continues to dwindle unless users take proactive steps to protect it. Please check and update your privacy settings on your social media accounts.
- Your personal and professional life could overlap when what is shared becomes part of the public domain and may reflect on the author personally and/or professionally. Even after being deleted, comments and posts continue to live online in archival systems. Remember: you are a representative of Special Olympics.
- Delete any profane or derogatory comments on your personal social media pages. Always report posts that you feel are threatening, harassing, or inappropriate.
- Respect the privacy of others. Do not publish or tag photos of others without their permission. Avoid publishing someone's last name, school, or place of employment on social media if you do not have their permission. It is important to note that what you publish may be subject to public disclosure in legal proceedings.
- When commenting on posts that may pertain to Special Olympics, please clearly identify yourself as a volunteer with the organization and/or state clearly that the views you are expressing are your own.

Using Social Media on Behalf of Your Area

- For most Areas, Facebook is the most appropriate social media platform to reach a wide audience. The SOWA Marketing team is recommending that Areas consider converting existing Facebook pages to Facebook public groups under the main Special Olympics Washington Facebook page.
- Special Olympics' brand identity is joyful, inspirational, and authentic, among other traits. Keep your posts friendly and uplifting. Also, social media is highly visual so include photos, videos, or graphics in your posts.
- Monitor your social media accounts daily to look for inappropriate posts and to



respond to questions and comments as needed. Social media is a dialogue, not a one-way communication.

- If someone asks you a question outside of your expertise, direct the person to the proper resource or ask the SOWA team for assistance.
- Remember that organizational policies regarding the use of photos and images apply online as well as in print.
- When posting, be mindful of copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of Special Olympics. Individual bloggers and webmasters may be held accountable for the information that they publish on their sites if it is illegal, defamatory, copyrighted, etc.
- Respect the privacy of others. Do not publish or tag photos of others without their permission. Avoid publishing someone's last name, school, or place of employment on social media if you do not have their permission. It is important to note that what you publish may be subject to public disclosure in legal proceedings.

Representing the Special Olympics Accredited Brand Online

- At no point should Special Olympics accounts be used for the purpose of expressing personal beliefs or opinions. Keep your personal views separate.
- Avoid conflicts of interest and maintain a distinction between your personal identity and the identity you represent on behalf of Special Olympics.
- Do not comment anonymously, conceal, or misrepresent your identity in your online activities.
- Do not use the Special Olympics name or logo to promote or endorse any product, religion, cause, political party, or candidate.
- When instances of misinformation occur in social media posts or comments, respond with facts and data.
- Avoid arguments and confrontations online. If you see a comment that would warrant an official response from Special Olympics, contact SOWA.
- Use the Special Olympics logo in accordance with branding guidelines set forth in the [SOI Branding Standards online](#).

Other Means of Using Technology

Technology can be used in many ways to bolster an Area Program. SOWA's website currently does not have the capability to share files; consider using one of the following free online tools.

Dropbox*

- Create folders with meaningful headings
- Add section titles to create a path of reference
- Add to your Dropbox account, then continue to add or make changes

Google Docs*

- Easily edit and style with tools to help format text/documents
- Choose from hundreds of fonts and add links, images, drawings, tables, etc.
- Access, create, and edit your documents wherever you go – from your phone, tablet, or computer

Microsoft Teams*

- Create a Channel for your ALT to share ideas and documents.
- Save and edit common documents
- ‘Chat’ with your Area Services Manager
- Access and edit your channel wherever you go – from your phone, tablet, or computer

Sample folders your Area Program may create, and share include:

- GMS
- PDF division (heat) sheets
- Fundraising event instructions
- Program and Area Program calendar(s)
- Area Program Guide
- Sports Information Guide
- Sports Rules

*NOTE: Special Olympics does not endorse these products but is citing them for the purposes of illustration.





Part 3: Resources

All necessary forms are kept updated on Special Olympics Washington's [Area Resources Webpage](#).

