



Special Olympics Washington  
**Area Leadership  
Handbook**

**Special Olympics**  
Washington



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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 Guide. 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 Guide 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**  
**Special Olympics Washington**  
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# Acknowledgements

Special Olympics Washington would like to thank the North America Area Guide Committee for all of their work in creating a framework, which staff can customize for their Area Directors. This guide will support and enhance the direct services that athletes, families, coaches, competition management personnel, and other volunteers will receive.

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*Thank you to the following Accredited Special Olympics Programs for sharing their materials in the Resources section of this guide:* Colorado, Florida, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.

**North America Area Guide, Released September 2017**





# 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. Through sports, Special Olympics creates inclusive communities where all people respect one another and work together for the greater good. 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.

Each Area offers official Special Olympics sports training and competition opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities and Unified Sports<sup>®</sup> partners (individuals without intellectual disabilities). Through sports, Special Olympics also creates ongoing opportunities for physical activity and socialization, fostering greater athlete involvement and satisfaction – which are critical to Special Olympics' growth.

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.

Special Olympics Area's "inverted pyramid" approach acknowledges Areas as leaders and champions. 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<sup>®</sup> 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 of 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 coordinator 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. In order 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.

In essence, 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 of 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 general 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
- Lodging at competitions

## Glossary of Terms

- **Accreditation:** Method of assuring that every Area meets the essential core requirements of the Special Olympics mission, as well as certain management and financial requirements. Accreditation grants the Area the legal right to use the Special Olympics name, logo, and other trademarks within its jurisdiction to conduct Special Olympics sports and related activities, and to raise funds under the Special Olympics name.
- **Area Director:** The Area Director is responsible for the coordination of all aspects of Special Olympics within a predetermined geographical area of SOWA.
- **Area Games:** Preliminary competitions that take place before Regional or State-level events. These serve as additional competitive opportunities for athletes, as well as provide information that is used to ensure that athletes have an opportunity to compete at an appropriate level according to their ability.
- **Area Program:** One of multiple geographical divisions of SOWA. The Area is comprised of an Area Leadership Team within a geographical area. The Area is the direct service unit for program coordinators and coaches.
- **Area Leadership Team:** The area leadership team is comprised of volunteers within a geographical division of SOWA that supports the areas direction and is a direct service unit for program coordinators and coaches.
- **Athlete:** A person who is identified as having an intellectual disability who is at least 8 years of age and registers to participate in accordance with the SOI General Rules. This individual trains in an Official Sport or Recognized Sport for a minimum of eight weeks or longer during the calendar year and competes in Area, Regional, or State Special Olympics competitions, or participates in a Motor Activities Training Program. Children between the ages of 2 and 7 can participate in the Young Athletes™ Program.
- **Athlete Input Council:** A committee comprised of athletes whose purpose is to facilitate discussion among athletes and pass along their suggestions to improve the program.
- **Athlete Medical Form:** Contains pertinent athlete information, including emergency contacts and medical conditions. This form must be completed by a medical examiner before participation in Special Olympics. This form is also known as the Athlete Participation Form, and is to be renewed every three years.
- **Athlete Release Form:** Each athlete is required to submit a consent form to participate in Special Olympics.
- **Class A Volunteer:** Any person who volunteers for a Special Olympics Accredited Program as a coach, chaperone, driver, overnight host, Unified Sports® partner, or otherwise in a manner that results in regular close contact with Special Olympics



athletes. Class A Volunteers also include those who may assume administrative or financial duties such as Committee Members, Event Directors, or Board Members.

- **Class B Volunteer:** Any person who volunteers at a single event; One-day, or walk-on volunteers who do not have direct responsibility or close ongoing contact with athletes.
- **Coach:** Individual charged with training athletes in a specific sport.
- **Division:** The competitive grouping of three-eight athletes in a particular sport based on age, gender, and ability level.
- **Global Messenger:** Athlete Ambassadors, as they are referred to in SOWA, who foster awareness and advocacy for the Special Olympics movement. Athletes may complete a training program in communications, speech writing, and presentations along with a speech coach.
- **Healthy Athletes<sup>®</sup>:** The Healthy Athletes<sup>®</sup> program is dedicated to providing health services and education to Special Olympics athletes, and changing the way health systems interact with people with intellectual disabilities.
- **Healthy Communities:** Local initiatives designed to improve health metrics for both athletes and the communities where they live.
- **Local Program:** The local program is the direct service unit for athletes and their family members within SOWA. 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<sup>®</sup> partners.
- **Medical:** See “Athlete Medical Form”
- **Participant:** A person with intellectual disability who trains but does not compete in a sanctioned SOWA event.
- **SOI General Rules:** The Special Olympics, Inc. (SOI) General Rules provide the rules and guidelines for all activities and bind participants (including Area Coordinators) to the Special Olympics purpose, mission, and goals.
  - View Special Olympics General Rules:  
[resources.specialolympics.org/RegionsPages/content.aspx?id=38097](https://resources.specialolympics.org/RegionsPages/content.aspx?id=38097)
- **Staging:** The area where athletes convene as they prepare to compete. This is used to ensure that athletes are placed into the correct competitive divisions.
- **Time Trials:** An event run to establish preliminary scores used to division athletes for final competition.
- **Unified Sports<sup>®</sup>:** An inclusive sports program that combines approximately equal numbers of teammates with and without intellectual disabilities on sports teams for training and competition. Age and ability-matching of athletes and Unified Sports<sup>®</sup> partners are specifically defined on a sport-by-sport basis.
- **Unified Champion Schools:** Unified Champion Schools create social inclusion in schools by building on Special Olympics’ values, principles, practices, and experiences.

- **Unified Sports® partner:** A person without an intellectual disability who trains in a Special Olympics sport and who competes at least once in a Special Olympics Game or competition at any level during the calendar year.

## Acronyms

- **AFP:** Application for Participation (Athlete Medical Release and Athlete Release Forms)
- **ALT:** Area Leadership Team
- **BOD:** Board of Directors
- **DD:** Developmental Disability
- **GMS:** Games Management Software
- **GMT:** Games Management Team
- **GOC:** Games Organizing Committee
- **HOD:** Head of Delegation
- **ID:** Intellectual Disability
- **IDD:** Intellectual and/or Developmental Disability
- **LETR®:** Law Enforcement Torch Run®
- **MATP:** Motor Activities Training Program
- **NGB:** National Governing Body
- **PDD:** Pervasive Developmental Disability
- **POC:** Principles of Coaching
- **PQS:** Program Quality Standards
- **RTP:** Registered Training Program
- **SRT:** Sports Resource Team
- **SOI:** Special Olympics, Inc.
- **SONA:** Special Olympics North America
- **SONG:** Special Olympics National Games
- **SOWA:** Special Olympics Washington
- **SRAC:** Sports Rules Advisory Committee
- **YA:** Young Athletes™

# Part 1: Quick Start Guide to Area Program Management

## Section 1: Overview

### Mission & Vision

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*The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.*

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The **vision** of Special Olympics is to help bring all persons with intellectual disabilities into the larger society under conditions whereby they are accepted, respected, and given the chance to become productive citizens.

One of the main ways Special Olympics is fostering inclusion through sports is the expansion of Unified Sports® Programming, which brings together athletes with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team to promote inclusion. First pioneered in the 1980s, Unified Sports® was inspired by a simple principle: **Training together and playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding.**

### 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 **ultimate 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/>.



## **Constituents**

A constituent is a member of the community who believes and supports the mission of the organization. Constituents are an integral part of Special Olympics and make up the fabric of programming and services provided at all levels.

## **Athletes**

Individuals of all ages and ability levels are welcome to participate in Special Olympics. There are a variety of programs for children and adults. To be eligible to participate as a Special Olympics athlete, the individual must be identified as having an intellectual disability. Individuals are eligible for training and competition at age 8, and there is no upper age limit. Children ages 2-7 are eligible to participate in the Young Athletes™ program, which introduces young children to sports activities through curriculum-guided play. Each athlete must have a current medical form signed by a medical professional and a release form on file in order to participate in practices or competitions.

## **Participants**

Special Olympics participants are those individuals with an intellectual disability who train in a Special Olympics sport but have not competed in Special Olympics Games or competition at any level.

## **Unified Sports® Partners**

Unified Sports® partners are individuals without an intellectual disability who participate in Special Olympics Unified Sports®.

## **Families**

SOWA supports family members in a variety of ways. Families are encouraged to participate at every level. All family members of Special Olympics athletes are encouraged to participate in Special Olympics as volunteers, coaches, and Unified Sports® partners. We also encourage families to join their Area's Family Support Network so they can share input, connect with one another, and get access to resources in and outside of SOWA programming.

## **Volunteers**

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the organization, and continue to serve as the primary source of support for athletes. Volunteer opportunities include serving as a coach, Unified Sports® partner, sports official, chaperone, committee member, fundraising volunteer, and more! Area Programs and services could not be provided without the support and commitment provided to the athletes by volunteers.

## **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 and seasons of training for competition. 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.

Through a Protocol of Agreement signed on February 15, 1988, the International Olympic Committee (the IOC) officially recognized SOI and agreed to cooperate with SOI as a representative of the interests of athletes with intellectual disabilities. The IOC's formal recognition of SOI carries with it a solemn duty and responsibility, which must be discharged by SOI and all of its Accredited Programs, to conduct Special Olympics training and competition in accordance with the highest ideals of the international Olympic movement, to guard and protect the use of the term "Special Olympics," and to protect the word "Olympics" from unauthorized use or exploitation. The IOC's Protocol of Agreement with SOI prohibits SOI, Programs, and GOCs from using the five ring Olympic logo, the Olympic anthem, or the Olympics motto. Each Accredited Program agrees to fulfill these responsibilities by accepting accreditation from SOI, as provided in its Accreditation License and Article 6 of the General Rules.

### **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: North King County, South Central, Northwest, Northeast, 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.

### **Donor/Sponsor**

It is through donors' and sponsors' financial support of the Special Olympics mission that athletes are able to 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.

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***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.***

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### 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 the 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 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
  - Provides area fundraising opportunities to cover area expenses.
- 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.

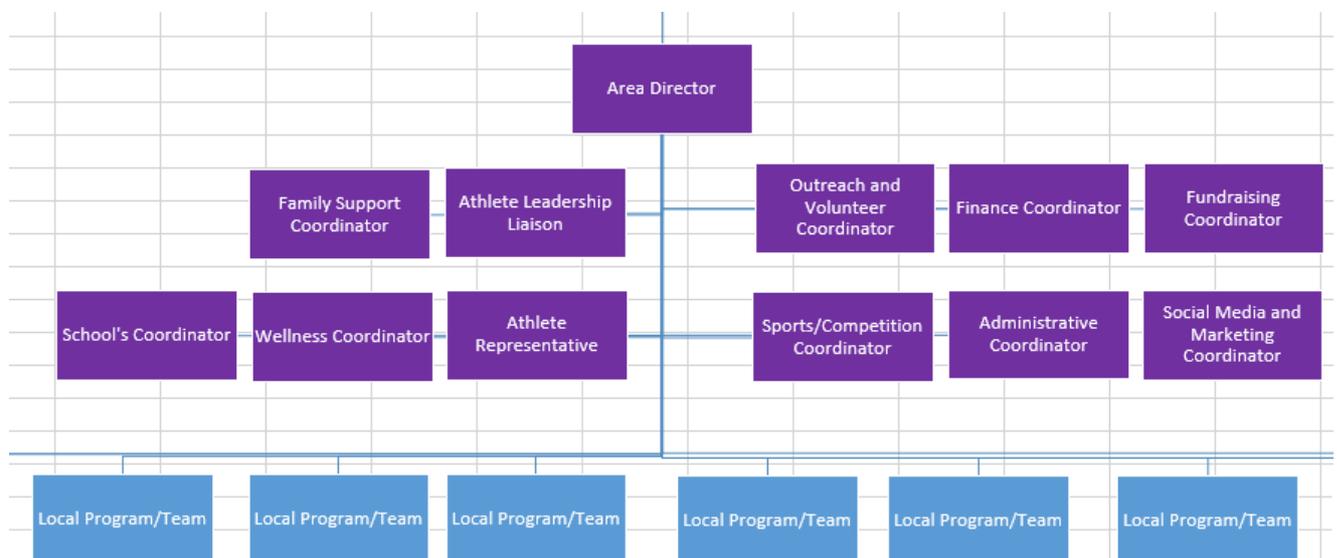
*\*\*If there are only one or two leaders on the Leadership Team, the structure could create some heavy workloads for these individuals and it could keep them from utilizing their resources in specialty areas that could aid the area. This does not mean the area is doomed to fail, but it should be a priority of these team members to recruit new individuals to the team.\*\**

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:

- **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.
- **Administration Coordinator:** Manage medicals, release 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 medicals to participate.
- **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
- **Finance Coordinator:** Oversee all aspects of financial administration for the area. This includes managing all Area Leadership Team and area budgets.
- **Fundraising:** Oversee plans to raise funds necessary to support the area and support Area Leadership Teams in fundraising endeavors.
- **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.
- **Athlete Leadership Liaison:** 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. Liaisons also provide training and support, when necessary, to athlete leaders.

- **Wellness Coordinator:** Direct athletes and family members to needed health services and resources. Assist the Health and Wellness Manager implement Healthy Communities programming.
- **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).
- **Athlete Representative from the AIC:** Athlete Representatives are Area AIC 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.

*Below is an example of an Area Leadership Team*



## 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

### 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.

*In order 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.

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

### Monthly Area Leadership Team Meetings

The Area Leadership Team needs to meet on a monthly basis, 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?
  - Sports & Competition Coordinator—what events are coming up? What sports are being offered?
  - Communications/Administration
  - Athlete Leadership
  - 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

In order 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:  
[http://specialolympicswashington.org/wp-content/uploads/2016\\_Athlete\\_Handbook.pdf](http://specialolympicswashington.org/wp-content/uploads/2016_Athlete_Handbook.pdf)
- Special Olympics athletes must be at least 8-years-old and be a person with an intellectual disability, or a closely related developmental delay 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:  
[http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/General\\_Rules/Article\\_02.aspx](http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/General_Rules/Article_02.aspx)
- Athletes must submit an Athlete Medical Form to Special Olympics. This health information form must be signed by a medical professional.
- Athletes must submit a Special Olympics Release Form (or comparable Special Olympics consent form). Athletes under the age of 18, or who have guardians appointed to them, must have their parent or guardian sign the form. Athletes who are 18 years of age or older without a guardian may sign the Release Form themselves.
- No athlete can be excluded due to lack of funds.  
See General Rules, Article 3: Sports Training & Competition:  
[http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/General\\_Rules/Article\\_03.aspx](http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/General_Rules/Article_03.aspx)

#### Unified Sports® Partners

Unified Sports® partners follow a similar registration process as athletes. In order to become a Unified Sports® partner, an individual must complete an Application for Participation, which includes a Special Olympics Release Form. Unified Sports® partners must also become an approved Class A Volunteer.

#### 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 coaches or if an applicant answers “Yes” to any of the questions regarding suspension or revocation of a driver's license. \*\*

All volunteers must receive training and materials regarding their volunteer duties and expectations.

SOWA may make a determination regarding the level of the volunteer's involvement based on the aforementioned 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 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)



## Disqualifiers

In order 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 a number of 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: <http://specialolympicswashington.org/wp-content/uploads/Volunteer-Handbook.pdf>

All Volunteer Registration Forms must be submitted before athlete training and competition begins. All volunteers listed as coaches or chaperones, or listed on a housing form for competition must have a completed and signed Class A Volunteer form on file.

Proof of Protective Behaviors and Special Olympics General Orientation training 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 and Protective training 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.

## Eligibility Statement

See also General Rules, Article 2: Special Olympics Athletes:

[http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/General\\_Rules/Article\\_02.aspx](http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/General_Rules/Article_02.aspx)

## General Statement

Special Olympics training and competition is open to every person with intellectual disabilities 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.

More information can be found on our website: [http://specialolympicswashington.org/programs-and-initiatives/family\\_supports/](http://specialolympicswashington.org/programs-and-initiatives/family_supports/) or the Family Support Network Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/783226725184217/>.

*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.



- Create & distribute a family welcome letter with a list of volunteer opportunities and resources available to families.
- Connect SOWA Families to other local 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.
- And the number one thing you could do for families is ask them to help and get involved.

### **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.

#### ***During Practice Sessions and at Competitions***

- Walk through the facility before each training session or competition.
- Always have a basic first aid kit available at every practice and competition.
- Always have athletes' medicals available at practices and competition. Be sure to protect the privacy of this information and note where these forms go at the end of the season.
- Establish a simple protocol in case of an accident or other incident. Provide all coaches with the most up-to-date and accurate emergency contact information for athletes, Unified Sports® partners, and volunteers.
- Create a simple crisis communication plan for your Area Program that includes who to contact, and in what order. Always notify the appropriate staff contact at SOWA of this plan.
- Ensure that there is at least a 4:1 ratio of athletes to coach in order to provide proper supervision (3:1 ratio for Winter Sports).



- Be sure to establish that a coach can contact the Area Director in case of an incident.
- Provide the coaches with the number and location of the nearest emergency services.

### **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 and to American Specialty Insurance if the injury or incident occurs in the U.S. This form can be obtained from SOWA.

### **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.

**NOTE:** If the injury is serious or results in death, please contact American Specialty immediately at (800) 566-7941 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) and SOWA's crisis communications contact and/or CEO.

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

### **Communications & Marketing**

For success to occur with all stakeholders, the Area needs to communicate often, and in a variety of ways.

For communications on behalf of Special Olympics and/or the Area, please use this Special Olympics letterhead, or contact SOWA for the template.

Template of Special Olympics letterhead:

[media.specialolympics.org/soi/files/resources/Communications/Branding/Project-Ignite/SO-AP\\_LHead\\_USLtr\\_Basic.pdf](https://media.specialolympics.org/soi/files/resources/Communications/Branding/Project-Ignite/SO-AP_LHead_USLtr_Basic.pdf)

## **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?***

It is important to communicate on a regular basis, even when something isn't immediately planned. For example: "We will start training for Winter Games in six weeks; look for the specific practice schedule to be out by \_\_\_\_."

At other times when there may not be forthcoming 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 general 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 coverage to expect from Area 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 general 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 general public?***

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

***Who's 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.

Any and all individuals speaking to the media or public should maintain clear, consistent messaging about the Area.

## **Language Guidelines**

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***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.***

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View the Special Olympics Disability Language Guidelines:

[http://resources.specialolympics.org/News/Resources/Updates/Good To Have The Special Olympics Disability Language Guidelines.aspx#.WV1Q4YqQz1L](http://resources.specialolympics.org/News/Resources/Updates/Good_To_Have_The_Special_Olympics_Disability_Language_Guidelines.aspx#.WV1Q4YqQz1L)

## **Branding**

Special Olympics has extensive branding guidelines, including sub-Program guidelines, that are available online: <http://resources.specialolympics.org/brand/>

## **Uniforms**

The following information is useful when ordering uniforms.

**Commercial Messages on Athlete Uniforms and Competition Numbers**

In order to avoid commercial exploitation of persons with intellectual disabilities – per the Special Olympics, Inc. 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.

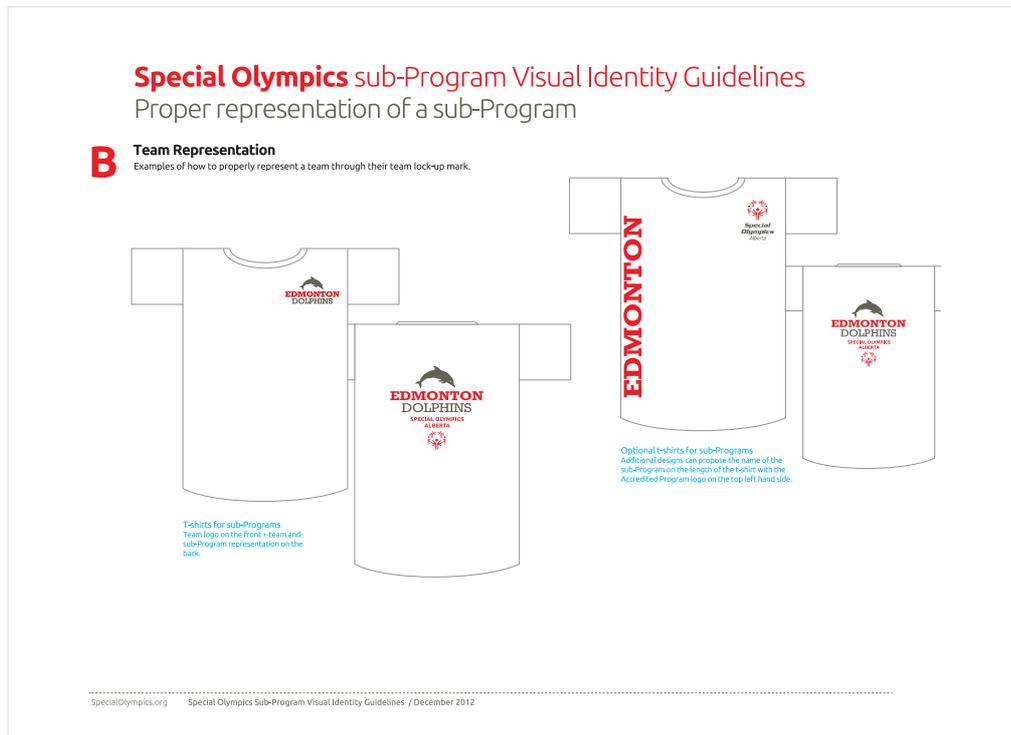
In terms of Special Olympics uniforms, “normal commercial markings” are limited to the following:

- 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 general 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.

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.



## Brand in action

### T-shirts

Lock-up for sub-programs, clubs or teams



When creating shirts for sub-programs, clubs or teams, a lock-up can be used that gives primacy to the actual team name. This acknowledges the importance of local teams within Special Olympics and facilitates the creation of distinct team identities for games within a program.

- 1 The name of the team has primacy on the shirt ensuring team or club recognition between competing teams. The choice of typeface and design of this element is at the discretion of the program.
- 2 The name of the Accredited Program to which the sub-program, team or club is affiliated is set in all capitals: Ubuntu Bold as illustrated here.
- 3 The Special Olympics symbol is centred beneath the program name.
- 4 The color, typestyle or motif created for each team reflects the local identity of the club or team as being within the Special Olympics Accredited Program.



### 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.

## 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
  - General Orientation, Protective Behaviors, Sudden Cardiac Arrest, and Concussion Awareness
  - Verified Volunteers Background Check Cleared
  - Attend Sports Specific training
- 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 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.

**Fact Sheets** for each sport are available at

<http://resources.specialolympics.org/RegionsPages/content.aspx?id=35044>.

### **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, Stand Up Paddle Boarding

### **Fall Sports**

Flag Football, Bowling, Gymnastics, Unified Robotics, Volleyball, Tennis

### **Winter Sports**

Basketball, Alpine, Cross-Country, Snowboarding, Skating, Cheerleading

### **Demonstration Sports**

Rowing, Table Tennis, Ballroom Dancing, Rugby, Disc Golf, Open Water Swimming, Sailing

### **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

Read Article 3: Sports Training and Competition in the Special Olympics General Rules:

[http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/General\\_Rules/Article\\_03.aspx](http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/General_Rules/Article_03.aspx)

### **Sports Rules**

All rules are in the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules book, located on the SOI website at

<http://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-rules/>.

Sports Resources can be found on the Special Olympics Washington website here:

<http://specialolympicswashington.org/become-a-coach/coaches-resources/>

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 Special Olympics Washington’s website to learn about the highly successful Unified Sports program in the community and schools all across the state:

<http://specialolympicswashington.org/unified/unified-champion-schools/>

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 at <https://nfhslearn.com/courses/36000/coaching-unified-sports>.

### ***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 local 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<sup>®</sup> partners in team sports must be of similar age and ability.
- Athletes and Unified Sports<sup>®</sup> partners in sports, such as golf, may have a greater variance in age and ability.

#### ***Unified Sports<sup>®</sup> Player Development Style***

- Athletes and Unified Sports<sup>®</sup> 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<sup>®</sup> Recreation Style***

- Consists of inclusive recreational sports opportunities for athletes and Unified Sports<sup>®</sup> 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:

<http://media.specialolympics.org/resources/sports-essentials/general/Sports-Rules-Article-1.pdf>

### **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:

<http://media.specialolympics.org/resources/sports-essentials/general/Sports-Rules-Article-1.pdf>



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.

## **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)**

[http://www.specialolympics.org/motor\\_activities\\_training\\_program.aspx](http://www.specialolympics.org/motor_activities_training_program.aspx)

- 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™

[http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/Young\\_Athletes/Young\\_Athletes\\_Toolkit.aspx](http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/Young_Athletes/Young_Athletes_Toolkit.aspx)

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 mental and physical development. Children learn how to play with others and develop skills important to learning.

*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

## Recruitment & Training

### Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of Special Olympics. The thoughtful recruitment, coordination, and retention of volunteers is critical. This process includes a number of 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
- Update appropriate web pages with volunteer needs



### **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 state wide volunteer recruitment and tracking system

### **Types of Volunteers**

#### **Class A Volunteers**

##### **Who is a Class A Volunteer?**

- Volunteers, who have regular, close physical contact with athletes.
- Volunteers in a position of authority or supervision with athletes.
- Volunteers in a position of trust of athletes.
- Volunteers who handle substantial amounts of cash or other assets of the Program.

##### **Who falls into the Class A Volunteer Category?**

Examples include coaches, unified partners, chaperones, ALP's mentors, overnight hosts, drivers for athletes, and volunteers who have substantial administrative and/or fiscal authority. Fundraising Event Committee members, Games Management Team members, Torch Run Volunteers, and Board members who meet the definition of a Class A Volunteer are also subject to the screening requirements.

- Please note: Any parent, sibling, or family member who serves in any of the above capacities, such as a coach or chaperone, for any athlete in a Special Olympics activity (including their own family member) is considered a Class A Volunteer and subject to the required screening process.

**Class B Volunteers-** Event volunteers and other volunteers who do not have much interactions with athletes. All sporting and special event volunteers that register for a job that helps the venue function fall under this category.

#### **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.

### ***Increasing Volunteers***

There are a number of steps Area Leadership Team Coordinators and committee members should take in order 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

### **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 and Unified Targeting Coaches

*There are a number of 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

***Special Olympics North America Coach Education System Overview***

North America staff are continually evolving and enhancing our coach education system to meet the needs of volunteer coaches and the athletes they coach. The Coach Education System identifies basic minimum requirements for all coaches and recommendations for continuing education. The intent is to assist Special Olympics Programs in designing and providing quality sports training for Special Olympics coaches and ultimately the athletes.

*\*Please note that each Program may have different requirements and language (i.e. Assistant Coach vs. Sports Volunteer) with respect to coach certification.*

***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 Verified Volunteers Background Check
- Complete the General Orientation and Protective Behaviors online training
- Complete online Concussion Awareness Course
- Complete an onsite Sport Specific Training
- Continuing Education: Complete an authorized training once a year.

**Sport Volunteer, Team Manager, Assistant Coach**

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

### **Courses for Continuing Education**

In order to maintain certification, a coach must complete an approved continuing education course once a year. More information can be found at [www.specialolympicswashington.org](http://www.specialolympicswashington.org)

### **Retaining Coaches**

Retaining coaches is critical. Coaches build trust and relationships with athletes, Unified Sports® partners, volunteers, and families. There are a number of 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's important to reach as many athletes as possible to help maintain growth. Below are a number of 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**

- Introduce the Unified Champion Schools program, which is a comprehensive model implemented in the U.S. that combines Unified Sports<sup>®</sup>, Inclusive Youth Leadership, and Whole School Engagement to create school and community climates of acceptance and inclusion. This can begin as early as kindergarten with Young Athletes™, and continue throughout elementary, middle, and high school with Unified Sports<sup>®</sup> 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<sup>®</sup> information to students and their families through newsletters and brochures.
- Connect with the Director of Unified Schools for School and College development prior to contacting the schools.

### **Target Young Athletes™**

- Partner with local groups that involve people with intellectual disabilities, such as The Arc and the Down Syndrome Society. Present information about the Young Athletes™ 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 Athletes™ Festival at Local Games and invite the public. To attract new families, incorporate Healthy Athletes<sup>®</sup> opportunities that begin with a Healthy Athletes<sup>®</sup> screening.

### **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<sup>®</sup>, Youth Leadership, and opportunities for Full Campus Engagement.
- [http://www.specialolympics.org/Sections/What\\_We\\_Do/Special\\_Olympics\\_College\\_Clubs.aspxFundraising](http://www.specialolympics.org/Sections/What_We_Do/Special_Olympics_College_Clubs.aspxFundraising)

## **Athlete Leadership in Action**

### **What is Athlete Leadership?**

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 idea that all athletes can volunteer in addition to competing and help lead the movement in a variety of ways. An Athlete Leadership Liaison 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 Liaisons 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 an Athlete Input Council (AIC) which meets monthly. These athletes get input from other athletes in the Area and share input at each meeting. Area Directors should work closely with AIC Facilitators to provide feedback to the input the AIC generates and should also consult with the Athlete Representative on the ALT with requests for input that the representative can take back to the AIC.

### **Athlete Leadership Resources:**

<http://specialolympicswashington.org/programs-and-initiatives/athlete-leadership/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/128354111109387/>



## Fundraising

Fans and funds are the fuel that service the mission of Special Olympics. How money is maintained and your credibility, are important responsibilities of the Area Leadership Team. A few examples of some of the established Special Olympics fundraising events that Area Leadership Teams could take part in are the Law Enforcement Torch Run<sup>®</sup>, Polar Plunges, and Seasonal Campaigns.

Area Leadership Teams and Local Programs fundraise in order to create sustainable programs and encourage quality growth. The very first thing to do prior to engaging in fundraising is to contact the Special Olympics professional support staff through SOWA's office. Your Area Fundraising Manger is Donna Lindsay and she can be reached at [dlindsay@sowa.org](mailto:dlindsay@sowa.org) or 206-456-0201. She will guide you through the fundraising policies and procedures, as well as provide ideas and strategies to ensure success.

*When organizing a fundraising event, the following steps should be followed:*

- **Complete and submit a fundraising approval form.**  
Before you can begin organizing a fundraising program, it is required that you complete a fundraising approval form. This form will ask for basic information, including a simple expense and revenue budget to ensure that net earnings from the fundraising event are worth the Local Program's time and effort. Depending on the type of fundraiser, this form should be completed a minimum of 45 days to six months prior to the event.
- **Build a fundraising event plan.**  
Identify the overall fundraising objective – that is, how much you want to raise (gross and net) – and develop a timeline for what needs to be done by when. Be familiar with SOWA's sponsors and any restrictions that we may have regarding contacting existing and/or new sponsors. Since the organization works across the state, many corporate and foundation entities may be on our prospecting list. It is always best to speak with your Area Fundraising Manager and Area Services Manager prior to making any approach. One of these individuals can guide your approach or let you know the status of a pending solicitation.
- **Recruit, train, and manage volunteers.**  
Successful fundraising – particularly special event fundraisers – typically require a group of volunteers assigned to specific tasks. Shared ownership will help to ensure success of the fundraiser. Assign manageable duties to others, train as necessary, monitor progress frequently, make timely adjustments, and have fun!
- **Keep detailed records.**  
Make sure that all expenditures reconcile with bills and receipts, and that all revenue reconciles with items sold (such as auction items, raffle tickets, etc.) Use forms provided by the SOWA finance office to track expenses and revenue.
- **Deposit funds.**  
After an event, all monies received must be forwarded to SOWA finance department with details of where funds are to be deposited.



- **Thank supporters and sponsors.**  
Following a fundraiser, thank all supporters and sponsors for their contributions. Thank you letter templates and stationery or notecards are available from the Area Fundraising Manager and the SOWA your office. Official receipt acknowledgements are produced by SOWA and will be mailed to donors for tax purposes. If a donor makes a cash gift, be certain to obtain all contact information necessary to mail a receipt to his or her address. Certificates or plaques may be appropriate depending on the circumstances. Keep track of and continue to engage your supporters and sponsors.
- **Complete post-event evaluations.**  
In order to repeat a successful fundraising event, take time to conduct a post event evaluation. Share your best practices with the Area Fundraising Manager so that your experiences and practices can be recorded for other areas to use as a launch pad for their events.

### **Additional Fundraising Considerations**

- All volunteers who handle large sums of money are required to register as Class A Volunteers.
- There are many ways to raise funds. Deciding what is in the Area Leadership Team's best interest will be examined closely with your Area Fundraising Manager and Area Services Manager. Some common ways to raise funds include:
  - Sponsorships (sponsoring athletes)
  - Grants
  - Employee match programs
  - Letter writing and online campaigns
  - Memorial gifts
  - Special events (i.e. - raffles, auctions, concessions, dinners, garage sales, walk-a-thons, etc.)
- Consider participating in fundraisers already established by the SOWA office. Leveraging established SOWA fundraisers tend to be more cost-effective and successful than conducting a new event.
- Be aware of fundraising restrictions. Collaborate with the Area Fundraising Manager and Area Services Manager prior to soliciting business for corporate support in order to avoid multiple asks that may aggravate donor prospects and donor relations.
- Fundraising is done to support local programs and teams. Fundraising for a particular athlete – unless approved by SOWA's office – is strictly prohibited. If you wish to explore the Sponsor an Athlete fundraising model, remember that ALL athletes must be included.
- Fundraisers serve several purposes. Identify the purpose and match the amount of effort that will go into it based on its purpose. For example, a car wash can bring in great awareness; however, the amount of money it raises may be limited. Determine the value and balance the work put into the fundraising effort. Awareness is invaluable to our projects as with awareness, engagement and resources follow.



- Fundraising events are not allowed to have any direct affiliation with tobacco or alcohol products. \*
- All contractual agreements that address liability require approval by the SOWA office for those contracts to be considered binding.
- All funds raised by or donated to a Local Program must be deposited into the authorized SOWA local program account within five (5) business days of the event.
- Funds should be sent by check or money order. **Do not mail cash.** Cash may be hand-delivered to the SOWA office or to the Area Fundraising Manager. Always request a receipt for cash.
- Value-in-kind donations should be documented with a receipt to the donor. Your Local Fundraising Manager will have forms that can be utilized.

\*For more information, see

[http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/General\\_Rules/Article\\_05.aspx](http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/General_Rules/Article_05.aspx).

## **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 in order 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.

## **Additional Financial Considerations**

### Deposits

- All deposits will be made at the state office and recorded to the area budget
- Please do not send in cash. Cash should be sent in via a cashier's check
- Clearly identify what the deposit is for (i.e. fundraising event, donation, etc), and what area you want it reported in
- 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 are Restricted Funds. If designation is not made then funds will be recorded to the area as unrestricted to help pay for budgeted expenses.
- 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. Please see list of material expenses attached that require a signed PO by the Area Director or Finance Coordinator.
- 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.
- If the volunteer is using a rental car that is being paid for by the area, then gas receipts will be reimbursed only and not mileage.
- 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.

### Other

- 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.

## 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 in order 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 in order 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**

In order 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.

In order 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 in order 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 in order to provide specific requirements and job functions for volunteers

### *Budget*

- When determining the local 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 Special Olympics 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.

**Young Athletes™ Resources:** <http://specialolympicswashington.org/young-athletes/>

### **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:** <http://specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools/>

### **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. Specific to the needs and direction of the Area.

**Unified Champion Youth Leader:** A Unified Champion Youth Leader advocates for respect and inclusion, engage in and promote Special Olympics' activities, and provide opportunities to all people regardless of their abilities. These youth leaders educate, motivate, and empower others to become agents of change in the school and the community. Statewide leadership opportunity which provides a database of youth leaders for Area Leadership Team members to reach out to.

### **Inclusive Youth Leadership Information:**

[http://www.specialolympics.org/Sections/What\\_We\\_Do/Unified\\_Champion\\_Schools\\_Inclusive\\_Youth\\_Leadership.aspx](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.

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 Samantha Thompson, Health & Wellness Manager, at [sthompson@sowa.org](mailto:sthompson@sowa.org) or (206) 681-9386 to implement a Healthy Communities program in your area.

### **Healthy Athletes®**

The Healthy Athletes® program is dedicated to providing health services and education to Special Olympics athletes, and changing the way health systems interact with people with intellectual disabilities. Healthy Athletes® is implemented by your state program and a team of Clinical Directors at state and regional competitions.



### **Motor Activities Training Program (MATP)**

MATP provides sport opportunities for athletes who may not be able to compete, or are not ready to compete, in official Special Olympics Sports due to the severity of their disability or skill level. Offering MATP is a great way to recruit and ensure that opportunities are provided for all athletes to get involved. MATP is most often conducted within the agency or school systems where athletes reside.

#### **Motor Activities Training Program Guide:**

[http://www.specialolympics.org/motor\\_activities\\_training\\_program.aspx](http://www.specialolympics.org/motor_activities_training_program.aspx)

## Section 2: Developing Partnerships

### What is a successful partnership approach for Local 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.

### Prospects

#### Identify Potential Prospects

Who aligns with the Special Olympics mission? It is important to think outside of the box! You are our eyes and ears in your communities and are our team's primary source of information. On the flip side of that equation, we are here to provide you with guidance and support in the solicitation process. Continual communication will enhance and focus requests and help ensure the outcome is successful.

- Health and insurance companies
  - **Example:** What opportunities might be available for addressing obesity and Special Olympics athletes?
- Prominent companies in your community
- Potential family connections

Identify the value of your Local Program to a company through goals and objectives that the company is trying to meet.

#### Discover the Key Contact: Gatekeeper vs. Decision-Maker

- Get past the gatekeeper to the decision maker
- Develop a relationship and focus on getting the decision-maker to an event

#### Network Everywhere

- Keep an open mind
- Always listen for opportunities; all interactions provide an opportunity to share the Special Olympics mission and identify program needs
- Be Positive, on Point, and Persistent
- Many times, you will have to get through a lot of "No's" before you find the "Yes"
- Keep in mind that a "No" is not personal and it is not a rejection of you. "No" often means you must reframe your ask or timeline to suit the needs of the company or foundation
- Be persistent and reframe your ask when necessary
- Develop a YES mentality

#### Get in the Door

- Look at different levels of engagement; start small – the first request may not be for financial support



- Keep in mind that cultivation can take weeks or months before it results in significant financial support. See the chart below for a typical number of interactions with a prospect before you see results
- Do not be discouraged – each interaction is always bringing you closer to your goal
- The first level may be inviting the decision-maker to an event
- Connect the decision-maker with an athlete who can introduce them to Special Olympics
- In the course of conversation with the decision-maker, find out what is important to them as an individual and to their company
- Do not go into the conversation with a specific agenda; listen and develop their involvement together. Create a partnership.

### **Persistence Pays Off\***

\*The following statistics are from the National Sales Executives Association.

- 
- **2% of first contacts yield results; ask an individual to coffee**
  - **3% of second contacts yield results; take the individual to lunch**
  - **5% of third contacts yield results; invite them to an event such as the Polar Bear Plunge**
  - **10% of fourth contacts yield results; involve the individual in the Polar Bear Plunge as a participant**
  - **80% of 5th-12th contacts yield results; invite their company to become a team in the Polar Bear Plunge**
- 

### **Successful Steps in Getting Results**

The following steps are helpful in getting results as your Local Program works to develop partnerships.

#### *Introduction*

- Be observant when meeting with a prospect. For example, look around their office and note any pictures, certificates, honors, and/or banners. It's important to do research when seeking to develop a relationship.
- Get comfortable. Be upfront and state the objective of the visit.
- Help your prospect realize what you bring to the table that can be of value to their company.

#### *Fact Finding*

- Uncover their needs. Look for the hot buttons and what is meaningful to them. This is where the Area Fundraising Manager, the Director of Individual and Philanthropic Giving or VP of Development, Corporate and Community Partnerships can give you the most support. Utilize us.
- Listen 80% of the time and talk 20% of the time.
- Ask drill-down questions. Usually start with:



- Why? What value does this provide? How would this impact the program?
- Look and listen for clues about their priorities and dislikes.
- You can tell a lot by body language. If the prospect does not appear receptive or reactive to the conversation, change the topic to something that sparks a positive response.

#### Tips

- Assume a “Yes.” Use “when” instead of “if.”
- Do not assume you know an individual nor company’s needs.
- Be persistent. Understand that it takes time to build relationships.
- Align the request within the framework of the company/organization. For example, when introducing inclusive physical education, demonstrate how it can align with a school’s existing programming.
- Avoid giving too much information up front.
- Educate rather than sell. Understand and be able to demonstrate the impact of the activity/program, as well as its importance and value.
- Be honest; do not exaggerate numbers.
- Be flexible and open to change.
- Always enter with an open mind and confidence.
- Understand return on investment (ROI). What do you provide that the prospect needs?
- Be prepared!

#### The Pitch

Prepare your pitch by creating an outline that fits on an index card. Always start by introducing yourself, the organization, and your title. Be sure to explain that you are there because of the athletes.

Present the value of Special Olympics – both facts and anecdotal benefits; balance the two. Be sure to share what you feel will have the greatest impact.

#### Other tips for preparing your pitch:

- Share the vision, mission, and goals of Special Olympics, as well as the need(s) you are trying to meet.
  - Bring an athlete with you so that they may share a personal story and be a part of your pitch.
  - Share why **you** got involved – your own personal story
  - Describe the impact of Special Olympics on athletes, families, and the community
    - **Example:** Special Olympics athletes are five times more likely to be employed than their peers with intellectual disabilities that have never participated.
    - Through Special Olympics, athletes feel accepted, respected, and have the opportunity to become productive citizens.
- See Special Olympics Resource Toolkit for Research and Facts:



[http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/Research/Program\\_Research\\_Toolkit/Program\\_Research\\_Toolkit\\_Section.aspx](http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/Research/Program_Research_Toolkit/Program_Research_Toolkit_Section.aspx)

- Outline the impact of their donation in dollars
  - **Example:** 85 cents of every dollar goes directly to supporting athletes.
- Volunteering becomes a team-building activity. This can include volunteering for events, coaching, and/or fundraising opportunities.
- Present an option to get involved in an event or provide year-round sponsorship. See it as a partnership.
- Attend a fundraiser
- Play Unified Sports®
- Provide donation information
- Provide information on how to make a donation
- Direct them to the SOWA website
- Provide instructions on how they can get information via social media, such as Facebook or Twitter
- Ask if you can check back with them in two weeks
- Set up a meeting or presentation at site
- Have answers ready for possible objections
  - **They already gave:** Offer a team building or volunteer opportunity
  - **Hard times:** Offer in-kind/budget relieving options to offset costs
  - **The budget is complete:** Find out when budget is due and get in 60-90 days before it's due
  - **They are too busy:** Invite to coffee rather than lunch. Convey the need of just 30 minutes and send calendar invite
  - **The request is too large:** Have a menu of funding options to fit all budgets.
- Quantify their impact. Identify number of athletes, parents, and volunteers impacted
  - **Example:** 3,000 volunteers and families were exposed to your company's support, and that support helped showcase the skills and abilities of our 5,000 athletes
- Prepare for the close of the pitch
- Briefly and concisely summarize the request. Ask directly if you have their support
- Reaffirm the nature of their commitment
- Negotiate – know your worth and stand by it. If you “give away the farm,” there's no incentive for them to increase their support going forward.
- Never over-promise, but always over-deliver
- A Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement can outline roles and responsibilities that are clear and easy to follow. Check with the Area Fundraising Manager for a sample/template.

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***The difference between success and failure of one-time support versus ongoing support hinges on making the supporter/sponsor a true partner in your Local Program's success.***

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*How do we make the Supporter or Sponsor a True Partner in the Local Program's Success?*

- Develop and deepen the relationship
- Connect with them
- Meet face-to-face
- Engage them with athletes by inviting them to events
- Provide opportunities for athletes to network with other supporters
- Seek their expertise and input as appropriate – involve them!
- Be genuine
- Consistently evolve and reinvent the relationship. Keep it fresh
- Stay true to rights and benefits
- Deliver results promised to the partner
- Provide a thank you and/or small gift that will be meaningful to them
- Call quarterly to touch base and continue to deepen the relationship
- Speak of personal bests – they and athletes can relate to them. This also allows you to deliver the true sports and health impact. This helps them see Special Olympics as a powerful sports organization.
- Challenge their mindsets; educate and enlighten
- Work toward sustainability. Continue to deepen the connection with frequent communication and follow up.

### **Partnerships with Families**

Engaging families in any of the diverse roles in Special Olympics will strengthen your Local Program. Visit the Special Olympics Resources page on families to explore ways to actively engage athletes' families:

[http://resources.specialolympics.org/Common/Special\\_Olympics\\_A\\_to\\_Z.aspx?aspxerrorpath=/Topics/Family\\_Support\\_Network/Family\\_Toolkit.aspx](http://resources.specialolympics.org/Common/Special_Olympics_A_to_Z.aspx?aspxerrorpath=/Topics/Family_Support_Network/Family_Toolkit.aspx)

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

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## Section 3: Using Technology

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

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Here are ways technology can be used to benefit an Area Leadership Team.

### Communications & Marketing

#### Social Media

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

#### What is Social Media?

What defines and constitutes social media is constantly evolving and changing. Social media is a form of communication that is comprised of platforms that allow for the two-way sharing of information. Information shared on social media includes text posts, photos, audio, and visual media. Social media is comprised of multiple platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, Snapchat, and more.

#### Social Media Policy

It is important to have guidelines when using social media within the Area Program. Discuss this with SOWA to obtain their policy. Share this information with the Area's program coordinators, athletes, coaches, families, and volunteers.

#### Using Social Media

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*Special Olympics uses social media as a way to connect with current and potential athletes, coaches, donors, volunteers, parents, and the general public. Social media can be used to promote awareness of the Area Program.*

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#### Helpful Social Media Guidelines

Social sites are just that – social. While privacy does not exist in the world of social media, almost every social media platform has privacy settings that can help protect your privacy.

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. Remember, even after being deleted, comments and posts continue to live online in archival systems.

#### Using All Social Media Platforms (Including Personal Use)

Always protect confidential and proprietary information. Do not publish confidential information about Special Olympics athletes, staff, volunteers, families, community partners or sponsors.

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.



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.

### ***Using Social Media Internally***

- You should only make a social media account in the name of a Special Olympics Area Program with approval from SOWA.
- If someone asks you a question outside of your expertise on social media, direct the person to the proper resource. Do not act as a spokesperson.
- Refer all requests for acknowledgement or comment to SOWA.
- Social media is highly visual. Sharing information, photos, and videos is commonplace.
- Remember that organizational policies regarding the use of photos and images apply online as well as in print.

### ***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: <http://media.specialolympics.org/resources/brand-awareness-and-communication/branding/brand-guidelines/Brand-Identity-Guidelines.pdf>
- Monitor your social media accounts on a daily basis to look for inappropriate posts and to respond to questions and comments as needed – remember, social media is a dialogue, not a one-way communication.

### **Other Means of Using Technology**

Technology can be used in many ways to bolster an Area Program. If SOWA's website does not have the capability of sharing files, considering 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

**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

The Special Olympics Resources site is a self-service website that includes a variety of tools and valuable resources. Area Leadership Teams should contact the SOWA for additional resources.

**View Special Olympics Resources:** <http://resources.specialolympics.org/ResourcesDefault.aspx>

### Sample Checklists, Tools, and Best Practices

The following resources are offered as suggestions based on Area Leadership Team needs. You may customize the forms in this Resources section to suit your individual needs. Please check with SOWA to determine if they have an alternate form for these resources that can be utilized by the Area Leadership Team.

- Area Leadership Team General Position Descriptions
- Sport Training and Competition Checklist
- Codes of Conduct - Athletes, Coaches, Family Members
- Developing an Emergency Management Plan
- Incident Action Steps Card
- Inclement Weather Policy
- Transportation Request Form and Policy
- Area Leadership Team Detailed Job Descriptions
- Communication Tree
- State Maps
- Roster Forms
- In Kind Contribution Form
- Article One—Divisioning
- Protest Forms
- Check Request Forms
- AFP/Unified Partner Forms
- Accident Incident form





## **Area Leadership Team Leadership Team Position Descriptions**

### **Area Director**

The Area Director is responsible for providing strategic leadership and managerial responsibilities for the Area Leadership Team. The Area Director plans, organizes, and directs the Area Leadership Team in accordance with established policies to achieve the goals, objectives, standards, and mission of Special Olympics. The completion of responsibilities will be performed by the Area Leadership who have been empowered to lead and complete the specific functions outlined below.

### **Sports & Competition Coordinator**

The Sports & Competition Coordinator is responsible for administration, planning, and assisting in the delivery of a local program's quality training and competition events for Special Olympics athletes and Unified Sports® partners.

### **Administrative/Operations Coordinator**

The Administrative/Operations Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that all Special Olympics paperwork, policies, and procedures are adhered to so that athletes may train and compete, coaches can volunteer, and Unified Sports® partners can participate. The Administrative/Operations coordinator also oversees all data input into the Games and Volunteer Management Systems.

### **Finance Coordinator**

The Finance Coordinator and their team are responsible for all aspects of the financial administration for the Area Leadership Team. They also ensure that special events and fundraisers are following SOWA's financial guidelines.

### **Fundraising Coordinator**

The Fundraising Coordinator is responsible for developing dynamic and creative ways to secure new sponsors, execute fundraising programs and events, and build relationships within the community.

### **Outreach Coordinator**

The Outreach Coordinator is responsible for all aspects of children, youth, and adult athlete recruitment. The Outreach Coordinator works with schools, transitional programs, families, community sports programs, adult vocational settings, group homes, and governmental organizations in order to connect eligible athletes in the communities with Special Olympics local programs within the geographic area.

### **Social Media and Marketing Coordinator**

The Social Media and Marketing Coordinator is responsible for promoting awareness of what people with intellectual disabilities can achieve through participation in Special Olympics through all forms of media. Additionally, this person is responsible for marketing the Area's need for volunteers, upcoming events, dates, etc.

### **Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator**

The Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for recruiting, registering, matching, training, and coordinating all volunteers – including athlete leaders. They ensure that there are adequate numbers



of volunteers by roles, and that volunteers meet eligibility requirements as mandated by their roles (coach, partner, leadership, etc.).

### **Unified Champion School Coordinator**

The Unified Champion School Coordinator develops and implements Special Olympics Unified Champion School programs in schools within a geographic area. They recruit, educate, and mentor school personnel to develop and implement Special Olympics Unified Schools' components and Young Athletes™ in schools.

### **Athlete Leadership Coordinator**

The Athlete Leadership Coordinator oversees athlete leadership and ensures that there is an active Athlete Input Council, that year-round workshops are offered, and athlete leaders are recruited, trained, and engaged in all aspects of programming and governance within the Area Leadership Team.

### **Young Athletes™ Coordinator**

The Young Athletes™ Coordinator recruits community and school-based young athletes, registers, assists with securing equipment, and troubleshoots culminating event activities. They work with the Administration Team in registering these Young Athletes™. The team also ensures the training of all Young Athletes™ Coordinators.

### **Athlete Representative**

The Athlete Representative is an athlete from the Area's Input Council who brings information from the council to the Area Leadership Team and reports back to the council, as well as offers insights on programming from the athlete perspective.

### **Family Services Coordinator**

The Family Services Coordinator is responsible for encouraging and coordinating families' involvement in Area Leadership Team activities by providing local resources, hospitality areas at local competitions, picnics, or other social activities to network with other families. They also coordinate workshops to educate families about Special Olympics and other topics of interest.

### **Wellness/Fitness Coordinator**

The Wellness/Fitness Coordinator is responsible for coordinating year-round fitness, health promotion, and access to health and fitness resources for athletes, families, caregivers, and volunteers.



# Sport Training & Competition Checklists

## Checklist for Training Sites

### **Logistics**

- Facilities arranged and evaluated for safety and accessibility
- Equipment procured and prepared
- Length of practice
- Time of day for practice
- Availability of coaches and volunteers
- Communication of dates and times to athletes
- Documentation of scores or assessments

### **Athletes**

- Number involved
- Age level and maturity
- Skill level
- Adjusting for different skill levels
- Preparedness for potential injuries

### **Safety**

- Practice conditions
- Water available
- Weather Conditions
- Hazard-free playing surface
- Equipment in proper condition
- Emergency procedures
- Medical forms on site

### **Skills to Be Learned**

- Physical
- Motor
- Technical
- Mental

### **Delivery of Instructions**

- Key points
- Teaching methods
- Position of athletes: Not facing the sun, athlete needs such as hearing or vision, etc.
- Delegation of volunteers and assistant coaches
- Intervention for behavior or crisis
- Positive feedback and support
- Progression throughout the session:
  - Easy to difficult
  - Slow to fast
  - Unknown to known
  - General to specific

### **Organization of Practice**

- Warm-ups (body and skills)
- Review previously taught skills
- Introduce new skills
- Game or event situation; competitive experience
- Cool down and team talk
- Cell phone numbers of chaperones and coaches
- Emergency contact information for chaperones and coaches

### **Other**

- Communication with parents, coaches, and event staff
- Coordination with Special Events

## Competition – Outdoor Events Checklist

FACILITY	
<p><b>Outdoor Competition Area:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Repairs, refinishing, or re-sodding maintenance current (e.g. field free of large divots, holes, obstructions or protruding objects) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>2. Competition area is clearly marked and free of trash, debris, or hazardous objects <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>3. Out-of-bounds is clearly marked and free of debris <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>4. Adequate buffer area between competitors and spectators <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>5. Goal post, goalie cages, baseball bases, etc. installed properly <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>6. Standing water drained or removed from the competition/spectator area <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>7. Competition area contains adequate lighting (if appropriate) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> </ol> <p><b>Areas Adjacent to Competition Area:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adequate number of waste containers in place <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>2. Areas are free of slip, trip and fall hazards <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>3. Water fountain areas are free of puddles, algae build up and/or mud <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>4. Barriers to protect spectators are adequate and in good condition <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>5. Restrooms are available and clean <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> </ol>	<p><b>Bleachers:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Footers are blocked appropriately and do not move <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>2. Vertical openings between guardrails, footboards and seatboards are less than four inches <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>3. Metal bleachers are free of corrosion and/or damage <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>4. Wood bleachers are free of dry rot and/or damage <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>5. Transitional areas are clearly marked and free of obstructions, protruding objects, trash and debris <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>6. Handrails, seats and supports are securely fastened <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>7. Wood seats and handrails are free from splinters <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>8. Bleachers appear sturdy enough for anticipated loads <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> </ol> <p><b>Parking Lot:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lighting appears adequate <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>2. Area is free of slip, trip and fall hazards <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>3. Security is present <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A</li> </ol>
EMERGENCY RESPONSE	
<p><b>First Aid Equipment Checklist:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> List of athletes with special conditions (asthma, diabetes, etc.)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> List of emergency phone numbers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Adhesive bandages with gauze pads – assorted sizes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Antiseptic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Arm sling (triangular bandage is fine)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bandage scissors</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Butterfly closures</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cotton swabs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elastic tape</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> White tape</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elastic wraps</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Emergency blanket</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Latex gloves (multiple pairs)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plastic bags and bags for ice packs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sterile Water</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Resuscitation (CPR) masks/face shield</li> </ul>	<p><b>Access to Emergency Service:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Telephones and the appropriate emergency numbers are accessible <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>2. There is adequate passage for emergency vehicles <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>3. Athletes’ medical history forms are on site <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>4. Athletes’ emergency contact lists are on site <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> </ol>



## Competition – Indoor Events Checklist

COMPETITION AREAS	
<p><b>Competition Area:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Competition area is dry and free of obstructions and protruding objects <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>2. Competition area is clearly marked <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>3. Competition area contains adequate lighting <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>4. Out-of-bounds areas are clearly marked and free of obstructions, protruding objects, trash and debris <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>5. Adequate buffer area between competitors and spectators <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>6. Sport apparatus/equipment is secure and in good physical condition <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>7. Non-essential equipment removed from competition area <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>8. Emergency exits are adequate, unobstructed and clearly marked <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> </ol>	<p><b>Locker/Shower Rooms:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Locker/shower room appears sanitary (e.g. free of algae buildup, floor is dry) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>2. Water temperature is monitored (e.g. scald protection devices installed in the shower or coach/chaperone assist with water temperature) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>3. Lockers are properly secured and free of laceration exposures <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>4. Housekeeping in locker room area is in order (e.g. clothing and athletic equipment is properly stowed in lockers) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>5. Locker/shower room contains emergency lighting <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>6. Emergency exits are adequate, unobstructed and clearly marked <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>7. Shower rooms are free of laceration exposures <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> </ol>
FACILITY	
<p><b>Facility:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Exits and entrances are adequate, unobstructed and clearly marked <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>2. Facility contains emergency lighting <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>3. Power supply cords are free of frayed wires and do not create trip and fall hazards (e.g. extension cords taped to the floor) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>4. Access to electrical systems restricted (e.g. individual to monitor the electrical system or keep the system locked at all times) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>5. Interactive attractions properly installed and supervised (e.g. inflatable rides) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>6. Sufficient waste containers are provided <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>7. Water fountain areas are free of puddles, algae buildup and/or mud <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>8. Smoke detectors/heat detectors/fire alarms/fire extinguishers (present and operational) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>9. Facility is handicap accessible <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> </ol> <p><b>Parking Lot:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lighting appears adequate <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>2. Area is free of slip, trip and fall hazards <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>3. Security is present <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A</li> </ol>	<p><b>Walkways, Steps, Stairs, Ramps:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Walking areas are clearly marked and free of obstructions, protruding objects, trash and debris <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>2. Walkways contain adequate and operable lighting <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>3. Handrails are securely fastened <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>4. Stairs contain a non-slip material <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>5. Stairs/steps are free of clutter and debris <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>6. Sufficient waste containers are provided <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>7. Exits and entrances are adequate, unobstructed and clearly marked <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> </ol> <p><b>Bleachers:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Footers are blocked appropriately and do not move <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>2. Vertical openings between guardrails, footboards and seatboards are less than four inches <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>3. Metal bleachers are free of corrosion and/or damage <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>4. Wood bleachers are free of dry rot and/or damage <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>5. Transitional areas are clearly marked and free of obstructions, protruding objects, trash and debris <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>6. Handrails, seats and supports are securely fastened <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>7. Wood seats and handrails are free from splinters <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li>8. Bleachers appear sturdy enough for anticipated loads <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</li> </ol>

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

**First Aid Equipment Checklist:**

- List of athletes with special conditions (asthma, diabetes, etc.)
- List of emergency phone numbers
- Adhesive bandages with gauze pads – assorted sizes
- Antiseptic
- Arm sling (triangular bandage is fine)
- Bandage scissors
- Butterfly closures
- Cotton swabs
- Elastic tape
- White tape
- Elastic wraps
- Emergency blanket
- Latex gloves (multiple pairs)
- Plastic bags and bags for ice packs
- Sterile Water
- Resuscitation (CPR) masks/face shield

**Access to Emergency Service:**

1. Telephones and the appropriate emergency numbers are accessible  
 Yes  No
2. There is adequate passage for emergency vehicles  
 Yes  No
3. Athletes' medical history forms are on site  
 Yes  No
4. Athletes' emergency contact lists are on site  
 Yes  No



# Codes of Conduct

The following are sample codes of conduct for Area Leadership Teams. Check with SOWA to see which Code of Conduct is currently in use.

## Special Olympics Athlete Code of Conduct

Special Olympics is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all athletes to honor sport and the mission and vision of Special Olympics. All Special Olympics athletes and Unified Sports® partners agree to the following code:

### *Sportsmanship*

- I will practice good sportsmanship.
- I will act in ways that bring respect to me, my coaches, my team, and Special Olympics.
- I will not use bad language.
- I will not swear or insult other persons.
- I will not fight with other athletes, coaches, volunteers, or staff.

### *Training & Competitions*

- I will train regularly.
- I will learn and follow the rules of my sport.
- I will listen to my coaches and the officials, and ask questions when I do not understand.
- I will always try my best during training, divisioning, and competitions.
- I will not hold back in preliminary competitions just to get into an easier finals competition division.

### *Responsibility for My Actions*

- I will not make inappropriate or unwanted physical, verbal, or sexual advances on others.
- I will not smoke in non-smoking areas.
- I will not drink alcohol or use illegal drugs at Special Olympics events.
- I will not take drugs for the purpose of improving my performance.
- I will obey all laws and Special Olympics rules, the International Federation, and the National Federation/Governing Body rules for my sport(s).

I understand that if I do not obey this Code of Conduct, I will be subject to a range of consequences by my Program or a Games Organizing Committee, up to and including not being allowed to participate.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Athlete or Unified Sports®</b> <b>Partner Circle Role</b>	<b>Date</b>

## Special Olympics Coach Code of Conduct

Special Olympics is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all coaches to honor sport and the mission and vision of Special Olympics. All coaches agree to observe the following:

### Respect for Others

- I will respect the rights, dignity, and worth of athletes, coaches, volunteers, friends, and spectators in Special Olympics.
- I will treat everyone equally regardless of gender, ethnic origin, religion, or ability.

### Ensure a Positive Experience

- I will ensure that for each athlete I coach, the time spent with Special Olympics is positive.
- I will respect the talent, developmental stage, and goals of each athlete.
- I will ensure each athlete competes in events that challenge that athlete's potential and are appropriate to that athlete's ability.
- I will be fair, considerate, and honest with athletes.
- I will ensure that accurate scores are provided for entry of an athlete into any event.
- I will instruct each athlete to perform to the best of the athlete's ability at all preliminary competitions and finals competition in accordance with the Special Olympics Sports Rules.

### Act Professionally and Take Responsibility for My Actions

- My language, manner, punctuality, preparation, and presentation will demonstrate high standards.
- I will display control, respect, dignity, and professionalism to all involved in the sport.
- I will encourage athletes to demonstrate the same qualities.
- I will not drink alcohol, smoke, or take illegal drugs while representing Special Olympics at training sessions or during competition.
- I will refrain from any form of personal abuse towards athletes and other – including verbal, physical, and emotional abuse.
- I will be alert to any form of abuse from other sources directed towards athletes in my care.

### Quality Service to the Athletes

- I will seek continual improvement through performance evaluations and ongoing coach education.
- I will be knowledgeable about the Sports Rules and skills of the sport(s) I coach.
- I will provide a planned training program for individual practices and the season.
- I will keep copies of the medical, training, and competition records for each athlete I coach.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Coach or Asst. Coach</b>	<b>Date</b>
	<i>Circle Role</i>	



## **Special Olympics Family Member Code of Conduct**

We hope as family members, you will embrace the spirit of Special Olympics and help to provide a competition and training environment that enhances athlete character and skill development. The following Family Code of Conduct should be emphasized during training, competition, and special events at any level – including SOWA, Area Program, National, Regional and World.

*As a Special Olympics family member, I pledge the following:*

- I will let my athlete choose the sports in which he/she would like to participate. I will not force my choice upon him/her.
- I will remember that athletes participate to have fun and that the game is for them; not for the family members.
- I will see to it that my athlete's medical form is up-to-date, complete, and on file.
- I will learn the rules of the game and the SOI policies before I complain or protest.
- I (and my guests) will be a positive role model for my athlete and encourage sportsmanship by showing respect and courtesy, and by demonstrating positive support for all athletes, coaches, officials, and spectators at every game, practice, or competition.
- I understand that I play a vital role in the health and safety of my athlete's participation. I have a responsibility to assist Special Olympics in providing for the health and safety of all athletes by reporting suspicious behavior, talking to my child about personal safety, dropping off and picking up my child/guard from Special Olympics events at the times designated by the organization (not excessively earlier or later than said established times), and any and all other reasonable measures to assist in the protection of Special Olympics athletes.
- I (and my guests) will never engage in any kind of unsportsmanlike conduct, such as booing and taunting, refusing to shake hands, or using profane language and gestures with any official, coach, or family member.
- I will never encourage any behaviors or practices that would endanger the health and well-being of the athletes.
- I will teach my athlete to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility or violence.
- I will demand that my athlete treat other athletes, coaches, officials, and spectators with respect, regardless of race, creed, color, sex, or ability.
- I will teach my athlete that doing one's best is more important than winning, so that my athlete will never feel defeated by the outcome of a game or his/her performance.
- I will praise my athlete for competing fairly and trying hard, and I will make my athlete feel like a winner every time.
- I will never ridicule or yell at my athlete or other participants for making a mistake or losing a competition.
- I will emphasize skill development and practices, and how they benefit my athlete over winning. I will also de-emphasize games and competition in lower age groups.

- I will promote the emotional and physical well-being of the athletes ahead of any personal desire that I may have for my athlete to win.
- I will respect the officials and their authority during games and competition, and will never question, discuss, or confront coaches during competitions. Instead, I will take time to speak with coaches at an agreed upon time and place.
- I will demand a sports environment for my athlete that is free from drugs and alcohol, and I will refrain from their use at all sports events and competitions.
- I will smoke/chew tobacco only in designated areas.
- I will refrain from coaching my athlete or other athletes during competitions and practices if I am not the assigned coach.

As a Special Olympics Washington family member, I also understand that if I fail to abide by the aforementioned rules and guidelines, I may be subject to disciplinary action that could include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- Verbal warning by officials, coaches, and/or sub-Program and SOWA personnel
- Game suspension with written documentation of incident kept on file in the SOWA office
- Written warning
- Game forfeit through official or coach
- Season suspension
- Misbehavior Report submitted to Event Director

**I hereby certify that I have reviewed, understood, and agreed to this Code of Conduct.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Family Member**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Print)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Area Leadership Team/sub-Program**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Athlete's Name**



# Developing an Emergency Management Plan

## Considerations

- Ideally, a physician, an athletic trainer, or a physical therapist knowledgeable in the triage and immediate management of athletic injuries should cover practices and games.
- The coach should provide the athletes' medical forms and any special instructions to medical personnel.
- An emergency medical technician (EMT) and ambulance should be available immediately upon calling.
- The coaching staff should be educated and skilled in immediate management designed to contain the extent of the illness/injury until appropriate medical personnel are available.
- The coach and all personnel should be certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid.

## Each coach is responsible for activating an Emergency Management Plan

- The coach should assess the situation as quickly as possible after an incident has occurred.
- The coach should assess the incident right where it occurred, determining whether the athlete can be safely moved.
- The coach should know the athlete and his/her personality to best assess injury versus reaction.
- The coach should remain calm, which will also serve to keep the athlete and others calm.
- The coach should listen to the athlete describe what happened.
- The coach should ask simple, clarifying questions.
- The coach should observe the athlete's face and eyes while talking.
- The coach should observe for any asymmetry, trauma, general body alignment, and functional abilities.
- The coach should survey the area where the injury occurred for any unsafe articles or terrain.
- The coach should evaluate the criticality of the situation, and then institute action based on the evaluation of the situation.
- The primary survey of the athlete evaluates airway, breathing, circulation, and consciousness.
- The secondary survey of the athlete evaluates the seriousness of all other injuries once it is determined that the athlete is breathing and alert, with good cardiac function.
- If no medical personnel are available, the coach should respond based on his/her assessment of the criticality of the situation.
- When in doubt, do not put the athlete back into play.
- Always refer to a healthcare professional for additional follow-up.

### **Crisis Communication Plan**

The difference between crisis and emergency is that crisis is a crucial or decisive point or situation, a turning point, while emergency is a situation which poses an immediate risk and which requires urgent attention. If this is a life-threatening injury or crisis, the SOWA President and CEO, Crisis Communication Liaison, and Public Relations Director should be contacted immediately.





# Incident Immediate Action Steps Guide

Each serious health and/or safety incident is unique and requires a particular set of responses. As a representative of SOWA, it is your responsibility to do what is reasonable under the given circumstances. While this guide cannot address every possible scenario, it provides you with basic action steps to take or consider taking **IMMEDIATELY** after an incident has occurred or commenced. Please make sure to fill in the phone numbers below prior to sanctioned events or travel.

In the event of an incident, follow the guidelines below, keeping everyone involved as calm as possible throughout.

- Assess the situation and remove all unnecessary individuals from the area. Only essential personnel should be present.
- Appoint others to keep the area clear.
- Appoint a person or person(s) to stay with the individual(s) involved at all times. Instruct the volunteer(s) to not render any treatment beyond his/her training. Do not move an injured individual unless he/she is in immediate danger.
- Determine if medical support (on site or ambulance) needs to be contacted. If yes, do so immediately. Have athlete medical form ready for medical personnel.
- Determine if law enforcement needs to be contacted. If yes, determine whether 911 or the local non-emergency number should be used. Non-emergency #: + \_\_\_\_\_ +
- If a family member/guardian/friend cannot accompany the athlete/volunteer to the hospital, either stay with the athlete or appoint someone to do so until a family member/guardian/friend can arrive.
- In the event of a serious incident or crisis, immediately contact + \_\_\_\_\_, the Crisis Communications Contact for SOWA. Explain the situation. SOWA will start coordinating any assistance needed. If you aren't sure if the incident qualifies as "serious," err on the side of contacting Special Olympics.
- You or your Area Director should contact the appropriate family/guardian of athlete/volunteer to apprise them of the situation.
- Cooperate with medical personnel and/or law enforcement in completing any necessary paperwork.
- In the event of media presence, speak from the statement on your Crisis Communication plan and do not speculate or expand upon this statement. Refer all media calls to SOWA.
- Record names and phone numbers of individuals present at time of incident for use on Incident Report Form and for possible subsequent questions.
- Once incident/crisis is over and the athlete(s)/volunteer(s) involved have all been released to their own supervision or the supervision of others, call SOWA, the appropriate family/guardian of the athlete(s)/volunteer(s), your Area Leadership Team Coordinator/Head of Delegation and apprise all of status.
- Complete an Incident Report Form and send to SOWA within 12 hours.

# Inclement Weather Policies

## Rain Policy

Decisions on field closures are made as late as possible in order to give the best possible chance for the game to be played.

## Winter Weather Policy

Players are more susceptible to injuries during cold weather, particularly from pulled or torn muscles. Players should be encouraged to wear appropriate clothing to aid body heat retention, yet afford adequate movement without creating a safety hazard. As a general rule, training programs should follow their High School Activities Association policies for cancellations.

## Hot Weather Policy

The risk of heat-related illness from vigorous sports activity increases with the temperature. The body generates heat, which cannot be dissipated readily when the ambient temperature exceeds 85°F, depending upon the humidity. Hot weather is considered at any point where the heat index reaches or exceeds 90°F. As a general rule, training programs should be reviewed if the heat index at the start of training is projected to be above 95°F. Coaches should exercise caution and provide additional water breaks.

## Thunder & Lightning Policy

If inclement weather is forecasted, an individual should be designated to monitor the weather forecast and radar during the competition. If the facility being used for competition has a lightning detection system, and a facilities policy in place that is more stringent than described below, the facilities policy will supersede the Special Olympics policy.

If lightning is detected within eight miles of the practice or competition facility, all coaches, players, referees, and spectators are to withdraw from the field and seek proper shelter. No place outside is safe near thunderstorms. The best shelter is a large, fully enclosed, substantially constructed building. A vehicle with a solid metal roof and metal sides is a reasonable second choice.

**30-minute Rule:** Wait at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder or the last lightning flash before giving the “all clear” signal and resuming normal activity. If thunder is heard or lightning is seen again within that 30-minute time frame, the event will continue to be postponed or officials may deem to cancel the event.

