



Special Olympics Washington
Unified Soccer 2018

Special Olympics
Washington



Special Olympics Washington Unified Soccer



Unified Soccer provides an opportunity for Athletes and Partners to train and compete together on the same team. Elementary and middle schools are encouraged to participate in Unified Soccer through scrimmages, jamborees, and a regional tournament with the chance to advance to state, whereas High School teams participate in ongoing leagues preparing them for districts and state competition in conjunction with WIAA. For individuals 18-25 years old, Unified Soccer continues at the University level through SO College with opportunities to compete in invitational and advance to SOWA Spring Games through Regional Tournaments.

Team Composition

Five-a-side competition- Each team will field five players, one of whom shall be the goalkeeper (can be an athlete or partner in Division 1 & 2, athlete only in Division 3). Three athletes and two partners should be on the field at all times. Please keep in mind appropriate roster ratios: 50/50 or 60/40. A 70/30 split is not encouraged, but acceptable. If your roster is an 80/20 split, your school will need to make 2 teams to provide a more inclusive ratio.

Team Roster – Division 1 and 2: Minimum 5 and maximum 10

– Division 3 (Player Development): Maximum 15

**Rosters need not exceed 10 players in Division 1 and 2. Rosters will need to be finalized a minimum of 2 weeks prior to your District Competition. The first 2 weeks of league play, schools will be able to move their rosters around to place students on appropriate teams that represent players of similar abilities. Please note that if you have multiple teams, coaches need to split teams based on ability level. For instance, instead of making 2 equal teams, look to see if your school can make a higher and lower level team for more meaningful competition and participation.*

Athletes – individuals **with** intellectual disabilities minimum three

Partners – individuals **without** intellectual disabilities minimum two

Ages – Teams should be made up of students within the same school whenever possible. It is permissible to allow a middle school student to step up to a high school team only if the high school doesn't have enough athletes to make up a team, the student doesn't take a spot that an eligible high school student could fill, the student is of similar size and maturity, **and the student is cleared by the school Athletic Director to participate** (rules vary per school district, check with your school AD). Likewise with combining elementary and middle school aged students. (For children ages 2-7, we have a program called [Young Athletes](#) – therefore they are not eligible for Unified Soccer until age 8)

Inter-District Teams – while teams are HIGHLY encouraged to be comprised of students from one school, there are instances an inter-district team (formerly community teams) might be appropriate. These teams would include students from multiple schools at the same grade levels when there are not enough students at one single school to create a Unified team.

SO College Teams – teams are comprised of higher education students and individuals with intellectual disabilities (ages 18 – 25 years old) in their school or surrounding community. Students in transition programs are encouraged to join these teams.

Coaches – non-playing adult coach, minimum two

The Official Special Olympics Rules shall govern all Special Olympics football (soccer) competitions. As an international sports program, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) rules for football (soccer). FIFA rules shall be employed except when they are in conflict with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules. In such cases, the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules shall apply.

Please refer to Article 1, <http://media.specialolympics.org/resources/sports-essentials/general/Sports-Rules-Article-1.pdf> for more information pertaining to Codes of Conduct, Training Standards, Medical and Safety Requirements, Divisioning, Awards, Criteria for Advancement to Higher Levels of Competition, and Unified Soccer.

Athlete Eligibility

Taken from Special Olympics Article 2

2.01(D)

Identifying Persons with Intellectual disabilities

A person is considered to have an intellectual disability for purposes of determining his or her eligibility to participate in Special Olympics if that person satisfies any 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; **or**
- The person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures such as intelligent quotient or "IQ" testing or other measures which are generally accepted within the professional community in that Accredited Program's nation as being a reliable measurement of the existence of a cognitive delay; **or**
- The person has a closely related developmental disability. A "closely related developmental disability" means having functional limitations in both general learning (such as IQ) and in adaptive skills (such as in recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care).

**However, 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, but may be eligible to volunteer for Special Olympics. Note: Not all students who are on an IEP qualify as a Special Olympics Athlete.*

Equipment/Field Set-up

Field of Play – Rectangle with maximum dimensions of 50 meters by 35 meters. Minimum dimensions are 40 meters by 30 meters

Goalie Box Size – 12 meters by 8 meters

Goal Size – Approximately 4 meters by 2 meters (12 feet by 6 feet)

Soccer Ball – Size four for elementary/middle school and size five for all other players

Unified Soccer - 5 v 5 Rules

These rules and regulations will be enforced during Special Olympics sponsored competitions, including district, regional and state events. It is highly recommended that league play rules correspond with the below rules with the exception of scrimmages or jamboree formatted competitions. Rules are based off of FIFA rules and Special Olympics International. If there is not a modification for a specific rule in the Special Olympics Rules or the Unified Soccer Packet, that modification does not exist.

Game Length at Districts and State–

High School/SO College/Masters Unified level: The game shall consist of two equal periods of 20 minutes with a half-time interval of five minutes. The referee shall be responsible for keeping the official playing time.

Middle/Elementary School level: The game shall consist of two equal periods of 15 minutes with a half-time interval of five minutes. The referee shall be responsible for keeping the official playing time.

Game Length for League Play-

Depending on Region/League that your team is participating in, game length and competition structure might look different. When your team attends Districts, Regionals, and/or the State Competition, please refer to the "Game Length at Districts and State" section directly above. **League Play Coordinators will be keeping track of wins and losses, which will identify where Division 1 & 2 teams will be placed on the District Bracket. Wins/losses of Division 3 will not determine bracket place at Districts.**

Start of Play – The ball must be kicked forward from the center spot before being touched by another player. The same person who kicked the ball cannot touch it again.

Substitutions – Substitutions are unlimited in number (players may return to the field after being substituted). Substitutions can be made any time the ball is **out of bounds, between periods, after a goal is scored or during a timeout for an injury**. The coach must signal the referee or linesman in order to make a substitution. A substituted player can only come on to the field when given a signal by the referee.



Kick-ins – If a ball crosses the touch line (sideline) it shall be kicked back into play from the point it crossed the line. The ball must be stationary for the kick-in. Players from the opposing team must stand at least five meters (5m) from the spot where the kick-in is being taken. The kicker cannot play the ball again until another player has touched it. A player cannot score a goal directly from a kick-in.

Throw-Ins: There are **no** throw-ins. See kick-in rules above.

Slide Tackling – There is no slide tackling allowed. If so, a foul will be called and the ball will be given to the other team.

Goalkeeper –The goalkeeper may not pick up a ball passed directly to him/her by a teammate from a kick-in or pass-back. The goalkeeper may **not** drop-kick the ball.

When the ball passes over the goal-line (not in the goal), having last been played by an attacking player, the goalkeeper, standing within his own penalty area, shall throw the ball back into play beyond his own penalty area, but not further than the half-way line (i.e. the ball must touch the ground or another player before crossing the half-way line). The ball shall be deemed in play as soon as it passed outside the penalty area. *The above rule also applies when the goalkeeper gains possession with his hands.

*See specific goalkeeper rules under “Divisions”.

Overtime – If overtime is used to break a tie, up to two five-minute “golden goal” overtime periods are used (first goal scored wins). If the game is still tied, penalty kicks will be used to break the tie. Ball possession for overtime will be determined by the flip of a coin.

Divisions – Unified Soccer Leagues may consist of teams within Player Development, Competitive Division 2 (low), and Competitive Division 1 (high). For further information on each level, please reference the [Unified Sports Model Comparisons document](#).

- **Division 1- Highly Competitive.** Players have attained sufficient & necessary sport-specific skills and tactics, No modifications of Official Special Olympics Sports Rules, Eligible to advance to higher, levels of play beyond the Program level (such as Districts, Nationals, and World Games)
 - **General:** Fast pace game. Athletes and partners all play at the same pace and there is a good flow to the game.
 - **Athletes:** Have a good knowledge of the rules. High skill level. Can understand multiple offenses. Can dribble, pass, and shoot.
 - **Partners:** Partners and athletes should complement each other and participate equally.
 - **Officials:** Should call the game very closely enforcing all rules.
- **Division 2- Competitive.** *Still competitive, but not as high skilled as Division 1.* Players still attained sufficient & necessary sport-specific skills and tactics, No modifications of Official Special Olympics Sports Rules, Eligible to advance to higher, levels of play beyond the Program level (such as Districts, Nationals, and World Games). *All players can shoot, play goalie, steal the ball from athletes and/or partners, etc. There are **no modification** around this Division.*
 - **General:** Generally fast paced game. Athletes and partners still function at a high pace but a slight difference in skill may be noticed.
 - **Athletes:** Have a good knowledge of the rules. Moderate skill level.
 - **Partners:** Partners and athletes should complement each other and participate equally. Not all partners will be at level 1.
 - **Officials:** Should call the game very closely enforcing all rules.
- **Division 3- Player Development.** Used as a stepping stone to gain knowledge and specific sport skills to progress to Division 2 in future seasons. Players are not required to be of similar ability; teammates of higher ability serve as mentors to assist players of lower abilities, Rules modifications define players’ roles, ensure meaningful involvement and prevent player dominance, and **No advancement beyond the District level**. This division focuses on cooperative play.

- **General:** Slower/Slow paced game but the integrity of the game is still intact.
- **Athletes:** Learning the basic rules and the game with support of the partners, learning how to dribble, pass, and shoot as well as, offensive and defensive concepts. Other athletes might not be proficient in Special Olympics Individual or Team Skills but are in the process of learning.
- **Partners:** Facilitate the basic skills needed to play basketball and/or some mentoring is happening. Encourage athletes to dribble, shoot or pass to others. On some team, partner might direct players on where to stand on defense and offense. A lot of leadership is needed at this level while playing.
- **Officials:** Should call fouls, hand balls, and remind players of the rules.
- **2018 Rule Modifications for Division 3:**
 - Only Athletes are allowed to play goalkeeper
 - One additional support player is allowed on the field to provide assistance to a lower level player. The additional support player must be identified by wearing a separate jersey color. This player is not allowed to make contact with the ball during game play. Coaches should work with the additional support player to provide the highest level of independence for the player receiving support. **Example:** Does the player that needs support need their hand held or could they be independent with directional ques or a quick tap on the shoulder. Independence is important! Don't take that away.
 - Headers will not be allowed in this division
 - 15 player roster limit. Teammates should have equal playing time.
 - Game Length: 10-15 min halves



*During league play Player Development and Division 1 and Division 2 teams and Division 2 and 3 teams will eventually play against each other. **Please play with sportsmanship.** If you see that your opponent is lowered skilled then your team, *do not* rack-up the points, instead switch people around to different positions, etc. At the same time, *do not* show pity on the other team by “accidentally letting them steal the ball, or score, or fake trip, etc.” this is what we are trying to move away from. For Districts, there will be separate divisions. Competitive Division 1 and Division 2 will have the top teams advance to state, whereas **Player Development will be non-advancing.**

Meaningful Involvement

Please make sure that each of your players, whether athlete or partners, are participating and engaged in the game. Player dominance should not be present. Please reference the Meaningful Involvement document for further information.

The following is a list of examples (and is not limited to) which could lead to possible “dominant play” sanctions:

1. Players consistently not utilizing teammates, ignoring teammates, bypassing teammates, etc... while attempting to penetrate offensively.
2. A player consistently dominates individually on either the offensive or defensive end of the field.
3. Players consistently have very limited opportunities to handle, pass, shoot and dribble the ball while there is team control.
4. Players repeatedly fail to pass the ball to an open teammates for an obvious scoring opportunity.

Sportsmanship

All athletes must agree to demonstrate proper sportsmanship. This means acting in ways that bring respect to all athletes, partners, coaches, opponents, fans and Special Olympics; refraining from the use of bad language; no insults; and no fighting with other athletes, coaches, volunteers or Special Olympics staff. Doing so may result in removal of the game, league, or team.

Participants using wheelchairs or that need assistance

Due to liability and safety reasons, Athletes or Partners that use wheelchairs or assisted devices, unfortunately cannot participate in Division 1, 2 & 3 Unified Soccer competition at this time. We encourage those individuals

to participate locally in the Unified Recreation Model within their school, or participate in Soccer Individual Skills, or [visit our website](#) and sign up to participate in our Individual Unified Sports programs. If you have students that utilize a wheelchair or assisted devices, please let your League Play Coordinator know so they can provide the coach with additional opportunities.



Uniform/Apparel

All players must wear soccer attire with identifying numbers and athletic shoes/rubber cleats. Uniform jerseys must be uniquely numbered and distinct from goalkeeper. A goalkeeper's jersey shall be a different color than the opposing team.

Team uniform shirts and shorts must be identical in trim color and style.

Undershirts, if worn, must match the color of the body of the uniform (not the trim) and must be identical in color. Undershirts may be worn by some or all of the players, and may be short sleeve or tank top (no cut or ragged edges are allowed).

Shin guards must be worn and covered by long socks.

Jewelry/earrings (with the exception of Medical Alert bands – which must be taped down) may not be worn.

Head Coverings – Head coverings for religious reasons must be documented with prior to tournament play and meet the same safety standards as for a medical head covering. Head covering must be of a single, solid color unadorned. This includes, but not limited to, sequins, trimmings, or any other forms of decorations. The only exception is an athlete may wear a head band no wider than two inches and made of nonabrasive, unadorned single colored cloth, elastic, fiber, soft leather or rubber. Rubber/cloth (elastic) bands may be used to control hair. They do not need to match uniform color. Sweatbands are also allowed. In the event an athlete is required by a licensed medical physician to cover his or her head with a covering or wrap, the physician's statement must be on file before it can approve a covering or wrap, which is not abrasive, hard, or dangerous to any other player and which is attached in such a way that is highly unlikely to come off during play.

Individuals who do not adhere to uniform regulations will not be allowed to enter a game.

For safety purposes, cleats are highly recommended on grass fields. For teams that practice/play on turf, tennis shoes are allowed, however cleats are preferred.

Unified Soccer Season Schedule

March – June

Unified Soccer Practices

Organized and run by **adult head coach** and assistant coach

- Attend Coaches meeting at beginning of season
- Help recruit athletes and partners
- Communicate with Athletic Director for gym availability
- Organize and facilitate a **minimum of one practice a week, no shorter than an hour**
- Conduct Parent meeting
- Athlete, Partner, & Coach Paperwork must be completed (check for signatures & health concerns)
- Meet deadlines

All **students** committed to playing will:

- Attend practices on time, unless prior notification
- Attend all league games, district tournament, and state
- Model meaningful involvement
- No cellphones
- Athletes and Partners should be treated equally

High School

Unified Soccer League Games: March - May



Unified Teams are required to attend at least **75%** of league play dates or a total of 4, whichever is fewer in your league (acceptable examples: 3 of 4 dates offered = 75%; 4 of 9 dates offered = min of 4). This includes inter-district teams, formerly known as senior level community teams.

League Coordinators (or Region Senior Manager) will organize league schedule and games and help as needed, including securing facility contracts

Season Length: 10 Week Season- Starting the week of March 18th, schools may start earlier, and ends May 26th

League Games: Will begin on or after March 31st

Competitions: Eight (8) weeks of competition that includes League Play, Districts, and State

First League Play: Will be a Jamboree/Round Robin, then games will move towards full-length games

Host Schools will be in charge of running the day of competition (varies per league), including:

- Set-up/Take Down
- Officials
- Score/Time Keepers
- First Aid
- Water

Unified Games should be mimicked as best possible after JV and Varsity Games, meaning they may include:

- Announcer
- Cheer Leaders
- Pep band
- Fans in the Stands

Unified Soccer District Tournaments

(High School, including inter-district, teams)

Districts 1 & 2 – May 5th

District 3 – May 5th

District 4 – May 12th

Districts 5 & 6 – TBD

Districts 7 & 8 – TBD

WIAA State Championships: May 25-26, Puyallup/Sumner

(High School, including inter-district teams)

State qualifiers will be determined at each District Tournament after the championship game. The champion of division one and two will automatically advance to the WIAA State Championships.

Elementary & Middle Schools

Elementary and middle schools are encouraged to connect with each other to set up scrimmages or jamborees. Contact your Region Senior Manager or the Director of Unified Schools to find out what schools near you might be interested in participating. Where space allows, teams could be invited to league play dates in conjunction with the high school teams – it will depend on capacity and ability to coordinate.

Elementary and middle school teams will be invited to compete at Regionals in the Juniors level. The champion of Juniors division one and two at Regionals will have the opportunity to advance to state competition at SOWA Summer Games.

SO College/Masters

SO College and Masters level Unified Soccer teams will have the opportunity to compete at their regional competitions and potentially several others. We encourage scrimmages and Unified Sports exhibition games along the way to get in even more games and unified fun!



Unified Soccer Regional Tournament

(Elementary, Middle, College, & Masters teams)

Contact Morgan Larche at mlarche@sowa.org to participate

SOWA Spring Games: June 1-3, Tacoma

(Elementary, Middle, College, & Masters teams)

State qualifiers will be determined at each Regional Tournament in Juniors and Masters levels after the championship game. The champion of division one and two in each will automatically advance to state SOWA Spring Games.

Quick Start Steps

1. Pick Practice Times and Location

- Check with Athletic Director to see what is available at your school
- Practice should be a minimum of 1 hour/week

2. Recruit Partners and Athletes

- Athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities)-
 - Talk to Special Education students and their parents
 - Send flyers home
- Partners (individuals without intellectual disabilities)-
 - Team up with ASB, Senate, Key Club, Honor Society, or Leadership teachers/advisors
 - Hold lunch sign-ups
 - Show the unified soccer video during advisory or during lunch

3. Hold a Parent Meeting

- Invite student who signed-up to play.
- Athletes and Partners will receive paperwork at the meeting.

4. Start Practices

Paperwork

What is due before you start practicing.

Athlete:

1. [Application for Participation](#) **NEW!** (valid for 3 years from physical exam date)

Unified Partners:

1. [Unified Partner Release](#) (valid until there is a change of information)

Coaches: NEW! * All coaches must go through our Online Volunteer Process, whether you are a Current Class A Volunteer or New.*

1. Apply here: [Volunteer Application](#)

Certification and coaches education process- to be completed once approved by SOWA contact

1. Complete WSP [background check](#)
2. Online training:
 - a. [General Orientation](#)
 - b. [Protective Behaviors](#)
 - c. [Concussion Awareness Training](#)
 - d. [Sudden Cardiac Arrest](#)
 - e. Complete [Unified Sports](#) Online Training *Unified Sports Coaches only.



Team Rosters

[Team Roster Form](#)

Additional Resources

[Student Guide to Unified Sports](#)

[Quick reference Coaching Guide](#)

[Special Olympics Soccer webpage](#)

[Special Olympics Washington Unified Sports webpage](#)

Notes for 2019 Season:

- SOWA will be introducing minimum and maximum number of games that teams will need to qualify for Districts
- Guidelines on what qualifies as a “Unified Soccer Game” example: length of time, official referee, etc. will be identified