



Dear recipient,

Special Olympics is committed to providing the best year-round quality competitions and experience at all events. Through the natural interactions created by sports, we can break down walls and empower individuals with and without an intellectual disability to be advocates and leaders within their communities. By competing in equitable and meaningful competitions at both the local and state level, athletes develop the courage and leadership skills that are crucial within their daily lives outside of sports.

With continued growth of participation and sports being offered each season, SOWA is constantly evaluating how to continue providing high level competition while enhancing the overall experience. One of the ways we may accomplish this is by providing more opportunities for competition at both the local and region level. These competitions not only allow for a more controlled and intimate environment that is vital to many of the athletes competing but is also a crucial step in following the policies and procedures set by our governing body, SOI.

While the goal of every athlete should be to compete at the highest possible level, Special Olympics exists to improve quality of life for all participants. Athletes and teams should strive to win division competitions and advance to state competitions. This should, however, never be the only goal of either an athlete or a coach. If it is, many additional positive aspects of Special Olympics may be missed. Learning competition and sports rules, and how to live within the guidelines, helps athletes learn life lessons with grace and dignity.

In an effort to achieve the above, SOWA will be implementing regional qualifying competitions for both Alpine and Snowboarding that will be required for teams to attend in order to make state competition in the 2018-19 Winter season. SOWA has been working towards this change the last two years and it was explained by CEO Dave Lenox during the 2017-2018 winter season. There will be two region competitions state wide; one in the **East region at Mt. Spokane, January 27th, 2019** and one on the West side for both the **Northwest and Southwest regions at Snoqualmie, February 2nd, 2019**.

By having these additional competitions, this will allow us to structure the State Winter Games in a way that will be more positive and enjoyable for all involved; Awards will be put back on the hill, both the Slalom and Giant Slalom will get two runs and the Downhill will get one run, we will be able to schedule a lunch break in the middle of the day that will allow athletes and volunteers a vital break while also allowing a buffer of extra time in-case the weather is affecting the flow of competition, and teams will be able to get off the hill sooner on Saturday to take-part in other events happening that evening. By reducing the overall participation number, this will allow SOWA and the Games Management Team to be able to focus on providing all around better quality of competition and experience.

What to expect for the 2019 Winter Games:

- Rolling awards taking place on the hill.
- Preliminaries will take place on Friday, March 1st and each competitor will be divisioned according to the times they place.
- Teams will compete in their divisions on Saturday and Sunday, March 2nd – 3rd
 - o Saturday
 - 9:30am – 12:00pm (Giant Slalom, two runs)
 - 12:00pm – 1:00pm (Lunch break)
 - 1:00pm – 2:30pm (Downhill, Super G, one run)
 - o Sunday
 - 9:30am – 12:00pm (Slalom, two runs)
- Time slots will be given to each division and ran accordingly. This will allow awards to flow more smoothly and help ensure everyone in the division may be present at the time of presentation.
- Leaving the hill sooner on Saturday to be able to take part in Healthy Athletes, Victory Dinner and Dance, and Olympic Town.

Based on 2018 participation numbers, Alpine will see the biggest changes in 2019 with 13% overall participation reduction for Individual events and 26% overall participation reduction for unified events with the advanced and intermediate levels being the most affected. Snowboarding will see very little changes, if any, since it is not as big as alpine, therefore, the overall numbers are more manageable. Though this may be the case based off previous year's data, 2018-19 Winter season registrations will determine overall percentages for both Alpine and Snowboarding and who will be advancing from Regionals.

SOWA is dedicated to seeing that these changes are implemented correctly and efficiently! With everyone's help and dedication, we can lay the foundation for a better SOWA where athletes may thrive both on and off the slopes in the years to come!

Sincerely,



Stephen Opland

Director, Sports and Competition

Special Olympics Washington