



TOPIC: Regional Competition FOOD

Dear Coaches and Program Leaders,

As part of our ongoing efforts to make Special Olympics Washington more sustainable and focused on long-term growth, we are making a strategic shift in how we provide food at **regional events**.

WHAT IS CHANGING?

In the past, we provided full lunches at regional competitions — typically costing around \$10 per meal, totaling up to \$20,000 per season / region. While we believe deeply in addressing food insecurity, this model has become financially unsustainable.

Moving forward, we are transitioning from full lunches to a hospitality model at all regional events.

This model allows us to provide **substantial, high-quality snacks** to athletes, unified partners, and volunteers. These snacks may be better suited for high-activity days when athletes need **sustained energy** without the heaviness of a full meal.

WHY THE CHANGE?

- We are facing financial constraints and need to ensure our resources go further.
- Hospitality is **more efficient** and **logistically manageable**.
- It allows our sports staff to focus on what matters most: **providing quality sport experiences**.
- Addressing logistical challenges and creating efficiencies aligns with our **strategic vision**: hosting more **local opportunities** that reduce travel burdens and improve access.

State-level events **will still include full lunches**, as those events require overnight stays and extended participation.

EXISTING SUPPORT FOR COACHES & TEAMS

We recognize this change may feel like an added burden. That's why we're offering a **stipend of \$5 per-person stipend** for teams to coordinate supplemental items as needed. Programs can use this to buy sandwich trays, fruit, drinks — whatever fits their athletes' needs.

Key details:

- **\$5 per athlete/partner/coach/chaperone** can be used to buy lunch or snack items.
- **Teams will purchase and be reimbursed** through our existing finance process (submit one itemized reimbursement form per team— missing receipt declarations will not be accepted).
- We encourage teams to **identify a team parent or volunteer** who can manage food logistics. This should not fall entirely on coaches.
- Funds can be pooled. For example, 40 people @ 5\$ / person = \$200 total budget.
- Coaches will have more **flexibility and control** over food distribution and team scheduling.

MOVING FORWARD: 2026 & BEYOND

Starting in 2026, **Special Olympics Washington will no longer provide lunch stipends at regional events.**

Instead:

- **Programs will be responsible for budgeting and fundraising** for any supplemental food or meal needs beyond hospitality.
- We will provide **guidance and sample budgets** that reflect realistic food planning — including adjusted per-person meal cost estimates (e.g., \$6–\$10).
- Teams will be encouraged to **organize their own food plans** locally, through partnerships, volunteers, or coordination with families and team parents.
- **Hospitality will continue to be provided at all regional events** — designed to meet athletes’ caloric and hydration needs during high-activity days.

This future model supports:

- **Local ownership and autonomy**
- **Financial sustainability** of the statewide organization
- A consistent, sport-first experience for all athletes
- The core belief that **no athlete should go hungry** at an event

We truly believe this is a smarter, more sustainable way forward that still honors our commitment to nutrition and athlete care. Thank you for being a part of this transition and helping us grow our movement.