



Recommending Suspension at the Area level

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

Refer to 'Codes of Conduct' for athletes/partners/coaches starting on page 2. Note: Special Olympics Washington has the right to suspend any participant based on circumstances presented. If you feel you have an extreme case that warrants immediate suspension, please contact your Area Services Manager directly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Further action could be, but is not limited to:

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

Appeal Process

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

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

Issues After Suspension

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

Re-entering a Special Olympics Program

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

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

Who to contact regarding an incident or questions:

1. Your Area Director; and/or
2. Area Services Manager
 - a. East: Luke Wall, lw@lwall@sowa.org
 - b. West: Alysanne Stack, astack@sowa.org

- - Below are Codes of Conduct for Athletes/Unified Partner/Coaches - -

Athlete/Unified Partner Code of Conduct

Special Olympics Washington prides itself in sponsoring high quality physical fitness training and sports competitions. The primary purpose of the Athlete/Unified Partner Code of Conduct is to establish a high standard of athlete behavior to ensure the safety and well-being of all athletes involved in training and competition. All participants are expected to abide by the code of conduct and standards of behavior as established by Special Olympics Washington. Please refer to this code for coaches as well.

Athlete/Unified Partner Standards of Behavior

While participating in Special Olympics Washington, whether in transit, during practice, at a competition, or in any associated social activity, participants are expected to exhibit good sportsmanship and to meet the following standards of behavior:

Category A – Refrain from:

- Use of alcohol, illegal drugs or any controlled substance.
- Unwanted physical or verbal sexual overtures.
- Physical abuse or any unwelcome physical contact.
- Violent or disruptive behavior.
- Felonies, misdemeanors, possession of harmful weapons, or any other illegal or socially unacceptable behavior which seriously disrupts or impedes participation of an athlete or others.

Category B – Refrain from:

- Profanity or verbal abuse.
- Tobacco use in restricted areas.
- Frequent unexpected absences.
- Poor personal hygiene.

Athlete Disciplinary Measures

In **Category A**, Special Olympics Washington (defined as State staff) reserve the right to immediately suspend any athlete, pending an investigation of the offense.

In **Category A**, the following progressive disciplinary measure can be exercised by the Area Director and SOWA Staff:

1. Verbal warning given to the athlete.
 - a. Personal meeting with the athlete (**Area Director**): Athletes under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or caseworker. The meeting will be documented in writing with copies distributed to the athlete, Area Director, State office, coach, and parent/guardian or caseworker.
 - b. Individual disciplinary action taken (**SOWA staff**): The action may include suspension or expulsion. In cases of suspension or expulsion, a review may be conducted at the end of the suspension period. In cases of very serious or repeated incidents, permanent expulsion by SOWA may be required.

In **Category B**, the following progressive disciplinary measures are to be exercised by the coach through approval of Area Director. Area Director to notify Area Services Manager:

1. Verbal warning given to the athlete.
2. Written warning issued to the athlete, with copy to Area Director and Area Services Manager
3. Suspension from practices or competition during the specific sport season or further action needs to be recommended to the SOWA state office and a decision will be made. If a suspension is decided, official documentation will be sent from the SOWA office to the participant with copies sent to coach and Area Director.
4. The athlete has the right to appeal, with a written plan in place to improve behavior.

Coaches Code of Conduct

Special Olympics Washington is a non-profit organization that sponsors high quality physical fitness training and sports competitions for people with intellectual disabilities.

The primary purpose of this Code of Conduct is to establish a high standard of behavior for coaches to ensure the safety and well-being of all athletes involved in training and competition.

Coaches are expected to meet the following standards while participating in Special Olympics, whether in transit, during practice, or at a competition:

1. Abide by the rules and policies of Special Olympics Washington.
2. Exhibit good sportsmanship and act as models for Special Olympics Washington.
3. Refrain from, and prohibit, physical and verbal abuse, profanity and other inappropriate behavior.
4. Refrain from and prohibit the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, and controlled substances. (Tobacco in restricted areas)
5. Guarantee adequate supervision of athletes.
6. Refrain from felonies and misdemeanors, including the possession of harmful weapons.
7. Within 24 hours, notify the Area Director of any offense in Category A or Category B of the Athlete/Partner Code of Conduct.

If a coach does not meet these standards, Area Director with the support of SOWA staff:

- will notify the coach of the undesirable behavior; and
- may suspend the coach indefinitely; or
- may expel the coach.