



Special Olympics Washington Winter Season Update

January 10, 2022

With rising COVID-19 case rates throughout the state, Special Olympics Washington will be making modifications to the Winter Season, including the difficult decision to cancel our 2022 State Winter Games, March 4-6. These decisions were made after receiving guidance from the CDC, Special Olympics International, and local health officials; considering the onsite logistics involved with new protocols that would be required at a large event; and gathering feedback from volunteers and teams. Special Olympics Washington has been closely monitoring the new COVID variant, Omicron. Upon returning to the office on January 3, Special Olympics Washington held an emergency meeting with our senior leadership team along with our emergency management council to discuss the best actions moving forward given recent data.

Guiding Principles:

- The health and safety of all members of Special Olympics Washington is paramount.
- We will continue to partner with local communities to provide quality programming opportunities – both in-person and virtually to anyone who chooses to participate.
- Participation is completely optional, and we respect, understand, and fully support anyone who is unable to or uncomfortable returning to practice.
- Guidance is based on current medical information and state guidelines and is subject to change as guidance evolves.

What you need to know: For the rest of this season, Special Olympics Washington will focus our efforts on meeting teams where they are by providing modified regional competitions and virtual opportunities, as well as working with programs to host local competitions. The new schedule will be published by January 18.

- **Basketball** - All community basketball competitions will be postponed until mid-February to early March. Coaches - the deadline for basketball final registration has been pushed back to January 25.
- **Alpine & Snowboarding** – The “Westside Regional” competition will stay the same. No changes have been made. The “Eastside Regional” competition has been canceled due to low participation.
- **Skating, Cheerleading, Cross Country & Snowshoeing** – Special Olympics Washington staff will be contacting programs directly to organize modified regional and local competitions.
- **Unified Champion Schools** – Unified Champion Schools will continue with the regular scheduled league play season and district competitions. Unified basketball teams will continue to follow school protocols and testing until further notice. At this time, there is no change to the existing Unified Champion Schools basketball schedule or paperwork deadlines.
- **Fundraising Events** – Polar Plunges will continue with the regular scheduled event dates; however, in-person activities will be modified. More information can be found at [PolarPlungeWA.com](https://www.polarplunge.com).

We encourage and strongly recommend all individuals participating in Special Olympics Washington activities get vaccinated if they can and continue to wear masks to protect themselves and others.

We understand the cancellation of State Winter Games will come as a disappointment to many and share in your disappointment. Special Olympics Washington will continue to do everything within our power to meet athletes where they are and ensure everyone has an opportunity to actively train and participate. Though these times are challenging for all, we will continue to learn, adapt, and come back better.

For questions, please reach out to your Area Director or Region Manager.