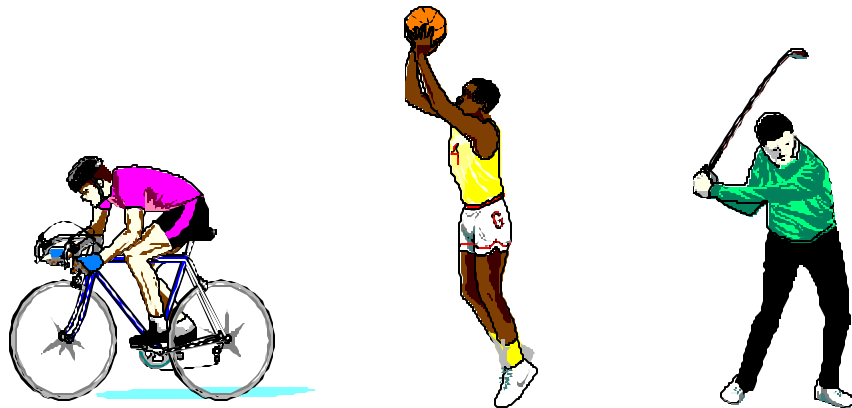




**Special Olympics**  
North America



**General Orientation**  
*Participant Guide*



*Please take this Guide with you  
and review the contents prior  
to each Volunteer Assignment.*



Dear Volunteer:

You are about to embark on a challenge that will bring you into contact with some very talented athletes. These athletes train year-round for the opportunity to compete in Olympic-type sports. These are the athletes within Special Olympics.

Volunteers are key to the success of Special Olympics athletes. Whether your volunteer responsibility is to coach, raise funds, provide medical assistance, distribute lunches or perform any number of other volunteer jobs, we could not conduct quality athlete training or competition without you.

Your commitment to the well being of Special Olympics athletes is evidenced by your participation in this General Orientation. You have come forward to accept the challenge to make the lives of our athletes better through sports. Whether at a one-day event or with a year-round program, the contributions you make will affect the lives of our athletes for years to come.

Thank you for your commitment to the athletes of Special Olympics.

Sincerely,

Jim Schmutz  
Managing Director  
Special Olympics North America



## **General Orientation Agenda**

### **Objectives and Competencies**

- ☞ Describe Special Olympics mission, philosophy and vision.
- ☞ Briefly describe the history of Special Olympics.
- ☞ Summarize the basic organizational structure of Special Olympics – grassroots to headquarters.
- ☞ Identify eligibility requirements and access into Special Olympics.
- ☞ Describe what opportunities in Special Olympics are available to volunteers.
- ☞ Identify Special Olympics sports and events.
- ☞ Identify how Special Olympics is unique from other sports organizations.
- ☞ Describe Special Olympics rules, ability grouping, honest effort, and divisioning.
- ☞ Describe available Special Olympics program offerings, challenges, and benefits to athletes.
- ☞ List the steps taken if suspect an athlete is being abused or neglected.

### **I. Introduction - Welcome (Global Messenger) and Goals of the Orientation**

### **II. Overview of the Organization**

- Special Olympics Mission & Philosophy; Vision; Athlete's Oath
- Brief History; Founder Eunice Kennedy Shriver; Athlete Participation
- Structure
- Roles for the Special Olympics Volunteer

### **III. Special Olympics Participants**

- Eligibility to Participate
- Mental Retardation / Developmental Disability
- Participation of Individuals with Special Considerations
- Facts on Mental Retardation / Developmental Disability

### **IV. Sports Training and Competition**

- Uniqueness from Other Sports Organizations
- Official & Nationally Popular Sports; Competition Opportunities: Athletes of All Abilities
- Sports Rules; Games & Competition Opportunities at All Levels
- Divisioning; Honest Effort
- Criteria for Athlete Advancement to Higher Levels of Competition
- Proven Benefits and Challenges / Opportunities

### **V. Athlete Protective Behavior**

- Preventing Physical Abuse; Preventing Emotional Abuse; Preventing Sexual Abuse
- Responding to Signs/Allegations of Abuse (Legal Issues; Policies/Procedures)
- Volunteer Code of Conduct

### **VI. Other Questions; General Orientation Goals Revisited; Evaluation**

# Special Olympics General Orientation

## Section I: Introduction

<b>Objectives:</b>	☞ Come to know the participants and each other.
	☞ Describe the goals for the orientation.

### General Orientation Goals

- Describe global Special Olympics mission and philosophy and vision.
- Describe mental retardation/developmental disabilities\* as a concept and its environmental expression or characteristics.
- Cite the importance of sports and physical activity.
- Identify Special Olympics current challenges and opportunities.
- Advocate for persons with mental retardation / developmental disabilities.
- Become a dedicated, impassioned volunteer.

* In different parts of the world, mental retardation is referred to people who have:
---

- |                            |
|----------------------------|
| v Intellectual disability  |
| v Developmental disability |
| v Mental handicap          |
| v Mental impairment        |

### Official Logo

The five figures represent Special Olympics' global presence...reaching and involving people around the world.



## **Section II: Overview of the Organization**

- Objectives:**
- ☞ Describe Special Olympics mission and philosophy and vision and values.
  - ☞ Briefly describe the history of Special Olympics.
  - ☞ Summarize the basic organizational structure of Special Olympics – from international headquarters through the grassroots.

### **Special Olympics Inc.**

#### **Special Olympics Mission**

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for persons eight years of age and older with mental retardation, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.

#### **Special Olympics Philosophy**

Special Olympics is founded on the belief that people with learning disabilities can, with proper instruction and encouragement, learn, enjoy, and benefit from participation in individual and team sports. These must be adapted only as necessary to meet the needs of those with mental and physical limitations.

Special Olympics believes that consistent training is indispensable to the development of an individual's sports skills. In addition, competition among those of equal abilities is the most appropriate means of testing these skills, measuring progress, and providing incentives for personal growth.

#### **Special Olympics Vision**

The vision of Special Olympics is to help bring Special Olympics athletes into the larger society under conditions whereby they are accepted, respected and given the chance to become useful and productive citizens.

#### **Special Olympics Athlete's Oath**

“Let me win; but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”

## **Biography**

### **Eunice Kennedy Shriver** *Founder of Special Olympics*

As Executive Vice President of the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation, and Founder of Special Olympics Incorporated, Eunice Kennedy Shriver has continued for over three decades to be a leader in the worldwide effort to improve and enhance the lives of individuals with mental retardation.

Born in Brookline, Massachusetts, the fifth of nine children of Joseph P. Kennedy and Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, Eunice Kennedy received a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology from Stanford University, Palo Alto, California.

Following graduation, Mrs. Shriver worked for the U.S. Department of State and held various positions in the field of Social Work. In 1957, Mrs. Shriver took over the direction of the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, created for the benefit of citizens with mental retardation. Under her leadership, the Foundation has helped achieve significant advances in areas such as medical research and public education. Mrs. Shriver has received international recognition for her work including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the United States' highest civilian award.

In 1968, Mrs. Shriver created Special Olympics. She is still actively involved in the daily operations of Special Olympics headquarters. Her husband, Sargent Shriver, serves as the Chairman of the Board of Special Olympics headquarters.

In her opening address to the 4,000 athletes assembled at the opening ceremonies of the 1987 International Summer Special Olympics Games, Mrs. Shriver captured the meaning of Special Olympics when she said:

“You are the stars and the world is watching you. By your presence you send a message to every village, every city, every nation. A message of hope. A message of victory.

The right to play on any playing field? You have earned it.  
The right to study in any school? You have earned it.  
The right to hold a job? You have earned it.  
The right to be anyone's neighbor? You have earned it.”

# Special Olympics History

## Some Historic Moments

### June 1963

Eunice Kennedy Shriver starts a summer day camp for children and adults with mental retardation at her home in Maryland, revealing their capabilities in a variety of sports and physical activities.

### 19-20 July 1968

The First International Special Olympics Games are held in Chicago's Soldier Field where 1,000 individuals with mental retardation from 26 states and Canada compete in track and field, swimming, and floor hockey.

### December 1971

The United States Olympics Committee gives Special Olympics official approval to use the name "Olympics," one of only two organizations.

### 5-11 February 1977

The first International Special Olympics Winter Games are held in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Two hundred eighty-five athletes, from Canada and 35 US Programs participate in alpine and cross country skiing and figure skating.

### February 1988

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) signs a historic agreement officially endorsing and recognizing Special Olympics.

### 20-27 July 1990

The third European Special Olympics Games are held in Strathclyde, Scotland. Twenty-four thousand athletes from more than 30 countries participate in eight official sports and five demonstration sports.

### 1-9 July 1995

The ninth Special Olympics World Summer Games are held in New Haven, Connecticut, USA. Over 7,000 athletes from 143 countries participate in 21 sports.

### 1-8 February 1997

The sixth Special Olympics World Winter Games are held in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Nearly 2000 athletes from 73 countries participate in five official and one nationally popular sport.

### 30 June – 10 July 1999

The tenth Special Olympics World Summer Games are held in Raleigh, North Carolina, USA. Over 7,000 athletes from 150 countries participate in 21 sports.

### 4-11 March 2001

The seventh Special Olympics World Winter Games are held in Anchorage, Alaska, USA. Nearly 2750 athletes from 80 countries participate in alpine skiing, cross country skiing, figure skating, speed skating, floor hockey, snowboarding, and snowshoeing.

### 21-30 June 2003

The eleventh Special Olympics World Summer Games are held in Dublin, Ireland. Nearly 7,000 athletes from approximately 150 countries participated in approximately 21 sports.

## **History of Athlete Participation**

### **Special Olympics**

2000 About 1.2 million from over 156 countries, representing every continent

1990 750,000

1988 588,500

1968 1,000

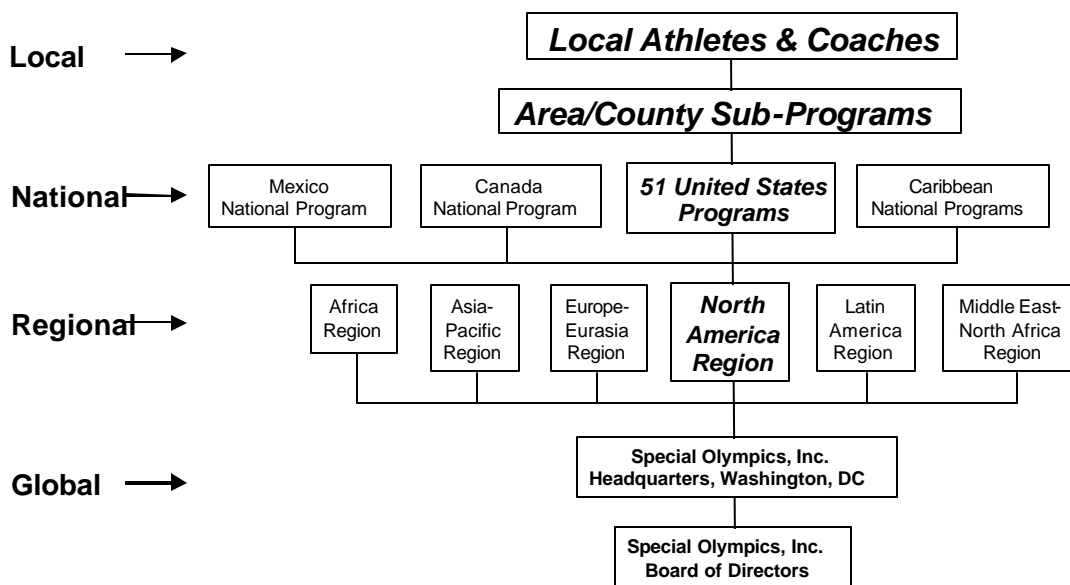


## Special Olympics Structure

**Special Olympics, Inc. is the world governing body of Special Olympics.** Based in Washington, DC, USA, the headquarters is staffed by approximately 100 individuals.

Special Olympics headquarters is responsible for accrediting Programs, worldwide, to conduct Special Olympics activities and programs. Special Olympics headquarters oversees the management of all World and Multi-National Games and coaching education. It also provides support and collaboration in the development of materials, international conferences, and regional train-the-trainer seminars.

### Special Olympics Organizational Structure



## Roles for the Special Olympics Volunteer

Since Special Olympics is a sports organization, there are many opportunities and roles for a Special Olympics volunteer. For example, employees of a company can come as a team of volunteers with a local Special Olympics program.

According to Points of Light Foundation, “Corporate volunteer programs advance strategic business goals, and, according to executives, significantly increase their company’s overall competitiveness in the global marketplace. Successful employee volunteer programs also motivate and provide training/skill building for their employees.”



## Section III: Special Olympics Participants

**Objectives:**   ☞ Identify eligibility requirements and access into Special Olympics.  
                  ☞ Describe what Special Olympics opportunities are available to volunteers.

### Eligible to Participate in Special Olympics

Persons are eligible for Special Olympics competition provided they are:

- at least eight years of age,
- have been identified by an agency or professional as having mental retardation, and
- have registered to participate in Special Olympics.

Athletes who have physical disabilities but who do not have mental retardation are not eligible for Special Olympics.

*Condensed from Article 6.01 of the Special Olympics General Rules*

**Special Olympics** training and competition is open to every person who:

1. Has been identified by an agency or professional as having mental retardation, **or**
2. Has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures, **or**
3. Has a closely related developmental disability, which means having functional limitations in both general learning and in adaptive skills (such as in recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care).

Persons whose functional limitations are based solely on physical, behavioral, or emotional disability or a specific learning or sensory disability are not eligible to participate as Special Olympics athletes. However, *these individuals may be eligible to be Special Olympics Unified Sports® Partners.*

Participation in Special Olympics training and competition is open to all persons with mental retardation, a cognitive delay or a closely related developmental disability who meet the age requirements *regardless of how mild or severe the person's disability, and whether or not that person also has other mental or physical disabilities.*

**NOTE:** Many Departments of Education no longer report students by level or intensity of service. They recognize 13 categories of disability of which mental retardation/developmental disability is one; however, the state is non-categorical in its service delivery system.

There is *no maximum age limitation for participation* in Special Olympics. The *minimum age requirement for participation in Special Olympics competition is eight years of age.* Children 6-7 years of age may participate in age-appropriate Special Olympics training programs but may not participate in Special Olympics competition or be awarded medals or ribbons associated with competition. Such children may be recognized for their participation through certificates of participation.

All persons who are eligible to participate in Special Olympics training and/or competition programs must register to participate with their local Accredited Program.

## Mental Retardation\*

### What is mental retardation / developmental disability?

*How is mental retardation / developmental disability expressed? What are some of the characteristics?*

Individuals with a slower rate of learning and a limited capacity to learn (typically scoring lower than 80 on a standardized IQ test) are identified as having mental retardation. Generally, they have a cognitive delay of two or more years. They may also walk and talk later, tend to be slightly shorter, and tend to be more susceptible to physical problems and illnesses.

In addition, such individuals may have difficulty managing the ordinary activities of daily living, understanding the behavior of others, and determining their own appropriate social responses. While having the same ranges of social behavior and emotion, they tend to have more frequent inappropriate responses to social and/or emotional situations due to difficulty generalizing information, difficulty in learning from past experiences, not fully comprehending what is expected of them, and lack of exposure to situations.

Mental retardation is more common than most people think. On average, three percent of the population may have mental retardation. However, only 1-2% of the population is actually receiving special services because of having mental retardation.

- ◆ Of the population with mental retardation, approximately 90% have mild disabilities and 10% have severe disabilities. Those with mild limitations may have a learning rate 40-70% of those without mental retardation.
- ◆ Those with severe limitations may lag four or more years behind their peers on physical and motor test. In addition, they are usually are incapable of traditional schooling. They need to master basic life skills and communication skills.

\* In different parts of the world, mental retardation is referred to people who have:

- Intellectual disability
- Developmental disability
- Mental handicap
- Mental impairment

## Participation of Persons with Down Syndrome and Atlanto-Axial Instability

There is evidence from medical research that up to 10% of individuals with Down syndrome have a malalignment of the cervical vertebrae C-1 and C-2 in the neck. This condition called *atlanto-axial instability* exposes individuals with Down syndrome to the possibility of injury if they participate in activities that hyper-extend or radically flex the neck or upper spine.

Special Olympics headquarters requires temporary restriction of athletes with Down syndrome who have *atlanto-axial instability* from participating in certain activities.

Prohibited activities include: butterfly stroke and diving starts in swimming, diving, pentathlon, high jump, squat lifts, equestrian sports, artistic gymnastics, football (soccer), alpine skiing, and any warm-up exercise placing undue stress on the head and neck.

Athletes with Down syndrome may be able to participate in the above sports if the athlete is examined (including full x-ray views of full extension and flexion of the neck) by a physician. This physician must have been briefed on the nature of the atlanto-axial instability condition and has determined (based on the examination) that the athlete does not have an *atlanto-axial instability* condition.

An athlete with Down syndrome who has been diagnosed by a physician as having an atlanto-axial instability condition may nevertheless participate in the sports identified above if:

- ✓ The athlete (or the parent if the athlete is a minor) confirms in writing his or her decision to proceed with these activities notwithstanding the risks created by the *atlanto-axial instability*;
- ✓ Two licensed medical professionals certify in writing that they have explained these risks to the athlete and his/her parent or guardian and that the athlete's condition does not, in their judgement, preclude the athlete from participating in Special Olympics;
- ✓ The statements and certifications are documented and provided to Accredited Programs using the standardized form approved by Special Olympics headquarters entitled "Special Release for Athletes with *Atlanto-axial Instability*" and any revisions of that form, approved by Special Olympics headquarters ("Special Release Concerning Atlanto-axial Instability").

## Participation by Persons who Are Blood-Borne Contagious Infection Carriers

No Accredited Program or Games Organizing Committee may exclude, isolate, or discriminate from participation in any Special Olympics training or competition any athlete who is known to be a carrier of a blood-borne contagious infection or virus.

In view of the risk that one or more Special Olympics athletes may have a blood-borne contagious infection or virus, Accredited Programs and Games Organizing Committees shall follow the "Universal Blood and Body Fluid Precautions" for every exposure to any person's blood, saliva, or other bodily fluid during training and competition.

## Facts about Mental Retardation

### Incidence

- Over 300 million worldwide
- 7.5 million in the United States

### Prevalence

- 7 times more prevalent than deafness
- 9 times more prevalent than cerebral palsy
- 15 times more prevalent than total blindness
- 35 times more prevalent than muscular dystrophy

### Classification of Limitations: Environmental Expression and Learning Characteristics

#### *Mild (90%)*

- Learn more slowly than peers
- Walk and talk later
- Generally slightly shorter
- More susceptible to illnesses
- More difficulties in appropriate behavior

#### *Severe (10%)*

- Usually incapable of traditional schooling
- Need to master life skills and communication skills

### Causes of Mental Retardation:

- Over 500 known causes
- Half have more than one causal factor
- Most prevalent known causes are fetal alcohol syndrome and iodine deficiency
- Most prevalent genetic cause is X-linked disorder
- Disorder can be biomedical, social, behavioral or educational

## Section IV: Sport Training and Competition

<b>Objectives:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Identify how Special Olympics is unique from other sports organizations.</li> <li>☞ Identify Special Olympics sports and events.</li> <li>☞ Describe Special Olympic rules, ability grouping, honest effort, &amp; divisioning.</li> <li>☞ Describe available Special Olympics program offerings, challenges, and benefits to athletes.</li> </ul>
--------------------	---

### Uniqueness from Other Sports Organizations

Special Olympics is more similar than different from other sports organizations. However, it is important to identify the five areas that make Special Olympics unique. Per Official Special Olympics General Rules:

1. A variety of sports opportunities are provided for all ability levels.
2. Ability groupings are created through a process called divisioning to provide equitable competition (evenness) for all athletes within each ability grouping (division).
3. Awards are provided to all participants who compete.
4. The established criteria for athlete advancement to higher levels of competition is based on order of finish for each division and random draw.
5. Special Olympics does not charge a fee to athletes (or their families) to train or compete.

### Official and Nationally Popular Sports

#### Official Summer Sports

Aquatics	Cycling	Powerlifting
Athletics	Equestrian Sports	Roller Skating
Gymnastics	Football (Soccer)	Softball
Basketball	Golf	Tennis
Bowling	Gymnastics	Volleyball

#### Official Winter Sports

Alpine Skiing	Floor Hockey	Speed Skating
Cross Country Skiing	Figure Skating	

#### Nationally Popular Sports

Bocce	Sailing	Table Tennis
Badminton	Snowshoeing	Team Handball

## **Special Olympics Competition Opportunities for Athletes of All Abilities**

Special Olympics aims to provide a variety of competition opportunities for athletes of all abilities by offering official events of various degrees of difficulty and challenge.

The lowest ability athletes can participate in specially modified events such as the 25m Assisted Walk (athletics) or the 15m Flotation Race (aquatics). There are also events for athletes who use wheelchairs. The Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) provides participation for individuals with mental retardation and disabilities requiring the greatest assistance and support.

In team sports, lower-ability athletes who are not yet ready for team play, can participate in Individual Skills Contests. For example, in football (soccer), athletes can earn medals for performing the skills of Dribbling, Shooting, and a Run-and-Kick event. Lower ability athletes may also participate in modified team events such as 3-on-3 basketball or 5-a-side football (soccer).

Most Special Olympics events have few differences from the sport played by individuals without disabilities. Higher ability athletes are now participating in events like the marathon, or in Unified Sports® events alongside athletes without disabilities.

### **Sports Rules**

All Special Olympics competitions follow the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules. These rules have been adapted from official rules of the National Governing Body or International Federation of each sport. In addition, the Special Olympics Sports Rules Committee approves the rules. After approval, the rules are set forth in the Official Special Olympics Rules books (Summer and Winter).

Rules are based upon existing governing body and community sports organization rules in order to facilitate athletes' transition into the community or school sports activities.

### **Special Olympics Games and Competitions at All Levels**

The Special Olympics Winter and Summer World Games, organized with assistance from Special Olympics, Inc. headquarters, provide an international showcase for Special Olympics athletes of all abilities. In addition, Accredited Programs will conduct State Games at least every two years. The true strength of the Special Olympics movement, however, is found at the local level where hundreds of thousands of athletes benefit every week from the challenge of high-quality competition.



## Special Olympics Divisioning

Special Olympics organizes its competition so that, whenever possible, athletes compete against others of similar ability. This process is called divisioning.

Athletes or teams are divisioned using the following basic procedure:

1. Divide by Gender: Male, Female or Combined (Under some circumstances)
2. Divide by Age:

Individual Sports	Team Sports
8-11	15 and under
12-15	16-21
16-21	22 and over
22-29	30 and over
30 and over	
3. Divide by Ability:
  - ✓ Pre-competition information and scores are used to place individuals or teams into preliminary divisions.
  - ✓ On-site preliminary events (timed heats or team observations) are conducted to verify or modify divisions for the final competition.
  - ✓ In individual sports, the suggested is that the difference between the best time/score and the worst time/score within a final division should not vary by more than 10-15%.
4. Combining Groups:
  - ✓ Age groups and/or males and females may be combined if this achieves a closer matching of ability.
  - ✓ The minimum number of athletes or teams in a division is 3. The maximum is 8.

In many Accredited Programs, the numbers of participants are so low that divisioning becomes a tremendous challenge. In all instances, competition management personnel are charged with providing competition among those of equal abilities. Thus, ability is the overriding factor as long as there is no health or safety risk to athletes.

## Honest Effort

According to the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules, athletes are to participate honestly and with maximum effort in all preliminary trials and/or finals. The Sports Rules Committee at the competition shall disqualify athletes, who fail to do so from all remaining events.

## Criteria for Athlete Advancement to Higher Level Competition

The following describes how athletes can advance to the next level of Special Olympics competition (i.e. from local Games all the way to Special Olympics World Games).

1. Athletes must have completed the minimum training requirements (including 10 hours within two months prior to a culminating competition) and competition experiences with a certified Special Olympics coach.
2. Training and competition experience must be in the same sport in which the athlete will be competing.
3. If quotas are limited, priority is given to first place finishers from all divisions of the sport/event based on eligibility requirements. If the number of first place finishers exceeds the quota, athletes are selected to advance by random draw.
4. If there are not enough first place finishers to meet the quota, all first place finishers advance. The remainder of the quota shall be met by random draw of the second place finishers. If the quota has still not been met, the process is repeated, adding each place of finish as necessary, until the quota is met.
5. An athlete shall not be barred from advancement due to prior competition experience. For example, an athlete shall not be prohibited from advancing to World Games solely on the basis that he or she competed in previous World Games.
6. Accredited Programs may establish additional criteria for advancement to higher-level competition based on behavior, medical, or judicial considerations. They may deviate from these advancement procedures due to the size or nature of their Programs. Requests to deviate from the established procedures must be submitted in writing as follows:
  - For advancement to Multi-National and World Games, Special Olympics headquarters will consider and approve or disapprove all requests.
  - For advancement to competitions up to the National or Accredited Program level, the Accredited Program will consider and approve or disapprove all requests.

## Proven Benefits of Special Olympics

Participation in sports brings significant benefits to people with mental retardation and developmental disabilities of all ages and abilities. The following benefits also reflect benefits of sports for everyone.

- Physical:** Physical fitness along with increased coordination, cardiovascular fitness, and endurance.
- Mental:** Knowledge of rules and strategy along with increased self-esteem, self-confidence, and pride.
- Social:** Teamwork, interaction with peers and people without mental retardation, opportunity to travel and learn about other places and interests, family pride, and increased community awareness and acceptance.

Dr. Elisabeth Dykens and Dr. Donald Cohen recently verified the above benefits in their study entitled “Effects of Special Olympics International on Social Competence in Persons with Mental Retardation.” In February 1996, this study was published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* (Volume 35, Number 2). However, other studies dating back to the middle 1960s also verified the above benefits.

The results for the athlete included:

- A richer, more rewarding life
- Improved skills and confidence that apply to school, work, home and social life, and
- Leadership opportunities

These are the reasons why Special Olympics puts so much emphasis on *consistent training, fair competition, and the importance of the coach.*

In addition, Special Olympics enhances school and community involvement. Such involvement includes:

- Interaction with others through a common interest in sports
- Development of lifetime sports and skills
- Participation in community-based facilities
- Information and awareness through public education
- Media exposure
- Opportunities to be involved in leadership roles such as speakers, coaches, competition management personnel, Board Members, etc. (Athlete Leadership Programs)
- Development of Partners Clubs® - peer coaches
- Development of Unified Sports® - peer teammates

## Challenges and Opportunities for Special Olympics

2003 was the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Special Olympics movement. The organization has more than three and one-half decades of remarkable successes behind it but still has many challenges ahead.

Future goals for the Special Olympics program worldwide include the following:

1. Strengthen Special Olympics at the local and national levels, both programmatically and financially.
2. Expand the number of athletes participating in the program at all levels.
3. Develop the quality of sports expertise involved in the management of Special Olympics at all levels.
4. Enhance the quality of coaching education by improving materials and training programs.
5. Offer additional training opportunities for athletes through camps, home training programs, Partners Clubs® and other training initiatives.
6. Enhance the quality of competitions within an Accredited Program, particularly at the local level.
7. Expand Special Olympics Unified Sports® participation and competitive opportunities.
8. Expand the Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) to bring Special Olympics opportunities to more athletes with the severest disabilities.
9. Explore the possibilities for additional competition opportunities above the national level.
10. Continue the active participation of Special Olympics Accredited Programs in the growth and development of the worldwide family of Special Olympics.
11. Expand the number of trained volunteers at the local level and the number of family members supporting their athlete.

## **Section V: Athlete Protective Behavior**

**Objective:** ☞ List the steps taken if one suspects an athlete is being abused or neglected.

### **Protecting Special Olympics Athletes**

To achieve the mission of Special Olympics, those responsible for supervising Special Olympics athletes in both training and competition must take positive steps to protect athletes as well as other participants.

Screening of staff and volunteers is but one part of our responsibility to protect Special Olympics athletes. Screening is never 100% reliable, therefore, we need to institute additional measures designed to protect athletes while they are in our care.

Below are suggestions for strategies to protect athletes when participating in Special Olympics activities. These procedures are founded in common sense. You will also note that in most respects they reflect the same precautions that would need to be taken to protect any group of vulnerable individuals irrespective of whether they have developmental disabilities.

#### **Preventing Physical Abuse**

- Corporal punishment including spanking, hitting, slapping, or other forms of physical disciplining will not be used by Special Olympics staff or volunteers.
- When assisting athletes with bathing or showers, volunteers and/or staff will check the temperature of the water to ensure that it is not too hot.
- Coaches and volunteers will not withhold water or food from athletes as a form of punishment. Water should be available for athletes during strenuous practice sessions and during competitions to avoid dehydration.
- Only medications that have been prescribed by an athlete's physician will be dispensed to that athlete as indicated on his or her consent form signed by either a parent or legal custodian.

#### **Preventing Emotional Abuse**

- At no time will coaches or other volunteers use profanity or otherwise curse at athletes for their performance or behavior during competition or practices.
- Special Olympics staff and volunteers will treat all athletes with courtesy and respect. It is not in keeping with the purposes of Special Olympics to use denigrating or demeaning nicknames for athletes or to permit their use by others.

- Special Olympics athletes will not be threatened or intimidated for any purpose including attempts at improving athletic performance or for controlling behavior. Discipline techniques will be constructive and positive.

### **Preventing Sexual Abuse**

- Whenever possible, in order to protect both athletes and volunteers, there should be at least two adult volunteers present to supervise activities such as changing into team uniforms, showering, and toileting. When it is necessary for a staff member or volunteer to speak privately to an athlete, they should find a place out of earshot, but within sight of others for their conference.
- Physical contact is important for normal human development. Hugs can be especially important to reinforce the positive nature of athletic competition for those who come in first as well as last. Hugs between Special Olympics athletes and volunteers should be open (not secretive) and respect the limits set by the athlete. The staff and volunteers must respect any resistance by the athlete to physical contact.
- Remember that hugging is an activity involving more than one person and respect for boundaries must be mutual for all parties. There may be times that volunteers or staff feel uncomfortable with physical contact with an athlete. Often, this discomfort has nothing to do with the athlete but more to do with the amount of physical contact and expressions of affection to which the individual is accustomed and comfortable.
- Special Olympics staff members and volunteers should avoid touching areas normally covered by swimming suits: breasts, buttocks and groin. Kissing on the lips and seductive massaging is not permitted (massaging pursuant to an injury or strain is permitted, but should be subject to observation by others).
- Special Olympics staff and volunteers should be positive role models and help Special Olympics athletes develop appropriate boundaries for physical contact. There may be times that an athlete will attempt inappropriate physical contact with a volunteer, staff member or another athlete. In such cases, the volunteer or staff member should identify the objectionable behavior, explaining that it makes the volunteer feel uncomfortable and that a better way would be to shake hands, do “high five,” or use some other more socially acceptable form of expression.
- Staff and volunteers need to be very specific about both the behavior that is troublesome as well as alternate ways to express the emotions that the athlete feels.
- When Special Olympics events require athletes to stay overnight, sleeping arrangements should take into consideration the gender and developmental levels of the athletes. Male and female athletes require separate accommodations. Athletes should also be assigned sleeping rooms with athletes of similar size and intellectual functioning.
- In Partners Clubs® and Unified Sports® Programs, athletes normally are assigned to share sleeping quarters with their partners or counterparts. To compensate for the increased opportunities for inappropriate conduct, Special Olympics suggests that all athletes in these situations be educated about inappropriate physical contact and whom to inform if infractions occur.
- In order to monitor Special Olympics athletes anytime they are in their quarters, hall monitors should be assigned on a rotating basis. They are responsible for keeping athletes in their own rooms, addressing needs of athletes that may arise and keeping unauthorized individuals out of

athletes' sleeping quarters. Room checks should be on a random basis so that Special Olympics athletes will not recognize a pattern.

- Consideration should be given to assigning teams consisting of male and female staff or volunteers as hall monitors, with men responsible for checking the rooms of male athletes and women responsible for the female athletes. Each team should work for an hour or two before being relieved by the next team.
- Special Olympics staff, with the assistance of volunteers, should know where athletes are at all times while the athletes are in the care and custody of Special Olympics.
- Special Olympics personnel should clearly explain the rules of behavior to the athletes before each road trip. Language used should be simple but explicit.

## **Responding to Signs / Allegations of Abuse**

### **Legal**

1. *Report* any reasonable suspicion (one based upon observation or disclosure) of any form of abuse or neglect must be *immediately to Special Olympics Program's Executive Director or representative*.
2. Many states have *an immunity provision* for people who report suspected abuse which is based upon observation or disclosure.

### **Special Olympics Program**

1. You will be asked to *complete a Special Olympics Incident Report* as soon as possible. Special Olympics Program staff will contact the police and/or Child/Adult Protective Services.
2. Special Olympics Program will immediately *suspend the alleged abuser's contact and involvement in all Special Olympics activities* until the allegations are investigated.
3. In addition, Special Olympics staff will contact the *appropriate protective services agency*.
4. If the media contacts you, refer them to the Special Olympics Program Executive Director. Do not comment to the media or anyone else about the alleged incident. The *Special Olympics representative* will be the **only** *spokesperson* to the media.

## Volunteer Code of Conduct

As a Special Olympics volunteer, I agree that while serving as a volunteer, I will:

1. Provide for the general welfare, health and safety of all Special Olympics athletes and volunteers.
2. Dress and act in an appropriate manner at all times.
3. Follow the established rules and guidelines of Special Olympics Program, Special Olympics, Inc. and/or any agency involved with Special Olympics Program.
4. Report any emergencies to the appropriate authorities after first taking immediate action to ensure the health and safety of the participants.
5. Abstain from the consumption or use of all alcohol, tobacco products and illegal substances while involved with ANY Special Olympics Program event, competition or training school.
6. Not engage in any inappropriate contact or relationship with athletes, volunteers or other participants of Special Olympics Program.

***Thank you*** for your interest, willingness, and efforts enabling Special Olympics athletes to develop their skills and become useful and productive citizens through the medium of sports!



## Special Olympics Exercise

1. Who is eligible to participate in Special Olympics?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What five unique aspects differentiate Special Olympics from other sports organizations?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What program does Special Olympics offer to athletes with the most severe levels of disability?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. List two unique characteristics of people with mental retardation/developmental disabilities that affect how they learn sports and require coaches to modify their instruction?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the minimum amount of time (weeks/hours) required within a sport season that Special Olympics athlete needs to train and compete?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Does Special Olympics stress the recreational or competition approach to sports?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Name one way Special Olympics competition differs from other sports competitions.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. When more athletes/teams qualify to advance than can be accommodated at a competition, what method is used to choose athletes and teams to compete in higher levels of Special Olympics competition  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What is Special Olympics Unified Sports®?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. List three opportunities available to individuals who want to be involved with Special Olympics as non-competitors? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. List the steps you take if you suspect an athlete is being abused or neglected.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## General Orientation Evaluation

Orientation Information:

Date: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_

Site: \_\_\_\_\_

Your feedback and comments are important as we try to improve the quality of our training.

### Administration

Please rate each item on a scale of 5 to 1 with 5 being outstanding and 1 being poor. Insert N/A if not applicable.

- Pre-orientation communication timely
- Site registration and instructional packet helpful
- Classroom facilities adequate
- Equipment adequate

### Overall Value of the Orientation

List three things that were the most valuable to you.

1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List at least one thing that you wish had been offered or at least one item that could be improved. Also, please offer a specific solution.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thanks for your interest and your feedback.

Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_