

# SPECIAL OLYMPICS POLICIES

## General Policies

To provide the most enjoyable, beneficial and challenging activities for athletes with intellectual disabilities, Special Olympics operates in accordance with the following policies. The General Rules and the Sports Rules are specifically designed to enforce these policies.

1. Special Olympics training and competition is open to every person with intellectual disabilities who is at least 8 years of age and who registers to participate in Special Olympics as required by the General Rules. People are eligible for Special Olympics provided that they are 2 years of age or older. People ages 2 through 7 are considered Athletes in Training (see page B-3 for more details). There is no maximum age limitation for participation in Special Olympics. An accredited program may permit children who are at least 6 years old to participate in age-appropriate Special Olympics training programs offered by that accredited program, or in specific (and age-appropriate) cultural or social activities offered during the course of a Special Olympics event. Such children may be recognized for their participation in such training or other activities through certificates of participation, or through other types of recognition approved by SOI that are not associated with participation in Special Olympics competition. However, no child may participate in a Special Olympics competition (or be awarded medals or ribbons associated with competition) before his or her eighth birthday.
2. Special Olympics must offer full participation for every athlete regardless of his/her economic circumstances.
3. Special Olympics is an athlete-centered movement and believes that the athlete is all important. Promoting athletes as the central focus of each training or competition program or event, developing the physical, social, psychological and intellectual qualities of the participants, and providing meaningful opportunities for participation in additional activities that support Special Olympics programming, must be the focus of every accredited program.
4. Special Olympics encourages coaches and family members of athletes to make every effort to encourage Special Olympics athletes to reach their highest level of athletic achievement in a particular sport and to provide opportunities for them to do so.
5. Each accredited program shall offer comprehensive year-round sports training conducted by qualified coaches in accordance with these Sports Rules. Every Special Olympics athlete who competes in a Special Olympics sport at a game or a tournament must be trained in that sport. Training shall include physical conditioning and nutrition education. Accredited programs shall establish written minimum training requirements for competitors in each official sport, in accordance with their respective accreditation criteria and these Sports Rules. Athletes who desire to compete in Regional Games, U.S. Multi-State Games or World Games must train for at least eight consecutive weeks in the appropriate sport and must have several opportunities to compete (including scrimmages and practice sessions) during that period. Each accredited program should offer athletes who are preparing for competitions at other levels within Special Olympics, such as for National Games, U.S. Program Games or Sub-Program Games (e.g., local, area, community), the same training and competition opportunities as are offered by that accredited program to athletes who participate in Regional, U.S. Multi-State and/or World Games.
6. Every accredited program must offer a variety of sports events and activities that are appropriate to the age and ability of each athlete, consistent with the program's accreditation level, and that foster full participation by each eligible athlete regardless of level of ability, degree of mental or physical disability, or economic circumstances.
7. Every program must, if required by its accreditation level, include Special Olympics Unified Sports® training and competition in which individuals with and without intellectual disabilities participate together on teams, and the Motor Activities Training Program for individuals with such severe intellectual disabilities that they cannot benefit from standard Special Olympics training and competition programs.





8. Special Olympics encourages qualified athletes to participate in school, club and community programs where they can train and compete in regular sports activities. The athletes may, at this point, wish to leave Special Olympics or continue to take part in Special Olympics activities as well. The decision rests with the athlete.
9. Special Olympics fully supports the concept of developing sports events for athletes with intellectual disabilities in conjunction with events conducted by sports organizations for individuals without intellectual disabilities. Accredited programs should encourage other amateur and professional sports programs to include demonstrations by Special Olympics athletes as part of their major events. In addition, accredited programs should work with other sports organizations to develop sports events in which Special Olympics athletes may compete with individuals who do not have intellectual disabilities, under circumstances that offer Special Olympics athletes realistic opportunities to excel and compete successfully, whether by participating in the same heats as all athletes or in heats organized specifically for Special Olympics athletes. Special Olympics personnel should work to create a feasible format for these integrated activities.
10. All Special Olympics sports training and competition activities and events shall be conducted in accordance with Article 1 of the General Rules, Official Sports Rules, and the other uniform standards. Each accredited program shall offer sports training and competition programs that meet the highest possible standards in facilities and equipment, athletic attire, training, coaching, officiating, administration and related events for athletes and their families. Special Olympics sports training and competitions must be held in a manner that protects the participating athletes, provides fair and equitable conditions of competition, and promotes uniformity in testing athletic skills, so that no competitor obtains an unfair advantage over another.
11. Special Olympics believes that every athlete deserves an equal chance to excel during competition. Thus, each competition division within a given event must be structured so that every athlete/team in the division has a reasonable chance to excel during competition. This must be done by placing athletes/teams in divisions according to accurate records of previous performance or trial heats and, when relevant, grouping by age and gender.
12. Special Olympics seeks to promote the spirit of sportsmanship and a love of participation for its own sake by stressing and celebrating the importance of, and personal achievement associated with, each athlete's participation and personal effort in Special Olympics, regardless of comparative ability. Special Olympics believes that every athlete should participate to his/her fullest potential. This means that in team sports, each coach must see that each athlete has frequent opportunities to participate. This also means that each game and tournament should offer as many sports as possible, with events for athletes of all ability levels. Special Olympics promotes this philosophy in the training of its coaches and officials.
13. All Special Olympics games and competitions - at the local, state, provincial, national and international levels - shall reflect the values, standards, traditions, ceremonies and activities embodied in the ancient and modern Olympic movement, broaden and enrich to celebrate the physical and spiritual qualities of people with intellectual disabilities so as to enhance their dignity and self-esteem.
14. At National and U.S. Program competitions, Regional Games, World Games and other Special Olympics Games, official medals shall be presented to first, second and third place winners. Athletes in fourth through eighth place shall receive ribbons with all appropriate ceremonies. Those who are disqualified (for reasons other than unsportsman-like conduct or violations of the divisioning rules) or do not finish an event shall be given a participation ribbon. For competitions below the accredited program level (e.g., at the area level), ribbons or a combination of medals and ribbons may be awarded.
15. Special Olympics training and competition activities must take place in public, with every effort made to attract spectators and generate coverage by the news media, in order to increase public awareness and support for the need and to exhibit the capabilities of people with intellectual disabilities.



16. Special Olympics shall offer every athlete multiple opportunities annually to participate in locally based competitions in official sports and nationally popular sports in which he/she is interested. These activities should include competitions with teams or individuals other than those with whom the athlete usually trains. Each accredited program must offer competition opportunities in at least the number of official sports and/or nationally popular sports required by the accreditation criteria for that program's accreditation level. In addition, in order to give athletes broader opportunities, area, state, provincial, regional, national and international competitions as well as tournaments shall be subject to available resources and be open to athletes representing the full range of skill levels.
17. Special Olympics is not designed to train elite athletes exclusively, but does provide training and competition for highly skilled and elite athletes with intellectual disabilities. Fair and equitable methods should be used to select athletes for participation in non-local competitions so that every athlete, regardless of skill level, has an equal opportunity to participate in each competition at his/her skill level.
18. Although Special Olympics is a sports training and competition movement, accredited programs may offer or cooperate with others who offer, as an adjunct to or integral part of Special Olympics Games, a full range of artistic, social and cultural experiences such as dances, art exhibits, concerts, visits to historic sites, clinics, theatrical and motion picture performances and similar activities.
19. In some countries with newly created Special Olympics programs it may not be possible, due to economic or other circumstances, to organize nationwide games. In such case, SOI may authorize such programs to focus on area or regional games with the goal of increasing public awareness of the capabilities of individuals with intellectual disabilities.
20. All Special Olympics training and competition must be conducted under the auspices of an organization specifically accredited and sanctioned by SOI to conduct Special Olympics programs.
21. To the greatest extent possible, Special Olympics activities should be organized by and involve local volunteers, from school and college age individuals to senior citizens, from civic clubs to businesses, in order to create greater opportunities for public understanding of and participation with people with intellectual disabilities.
22. The families of Special Olympics athletes are encouraged to play an active role in their community Special Olympics programs, to share in the training of their athletes, and to assist in the public education effort needed to create greater understanding of the purposes of Special Olympics as well as the emotional, physical, social and spiritual needs of people with intellectual disabilities.
23. Special Olympics recognizes the contributions and encourages the participation of other organizations such as a schools, parks and recreation departments, institutions caring for people with intellectual disabilities and independent living centers, which conduct sports training for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Accredited Special Olympics programs should encourage such organizations to train athletes in accordance with Special Olympics rules to facilitate the athletes' participation in Special Olympics competitions.

## Commercial Messages

- International Olympic Committee (IOC) rules state that no advertising is permitted on either the equipment used in nor on the uniforms and/or numbers worn by contestants and officials in Olympic Games, other than the normal commercial markings on retail goods; in fact, nothing may be worn on the uniforms of contestants or any person with an official function, except the flag or emblem of the National Olympic Committee as approved by the IOC.
- The display of any clothing or equipment, such as shoes, skis, handbags, hats, etc., marked conspicuously with something other than the normal commercial markings on retail goods, for the purpose of advertisement by participants (whether competitors, coaches, trainers or anyone else associated with an Olympic team in an official capacity) shall normally result in immediate disqualification from the games and may result in a loss of eligibility for participating in other amateur sports competitions.



- The aforementioned rules apply to Special Olympics games and competitions because of the relationship which Special Olympics has with the U.S. Olympic Committee. However, because of the voluntary nature of most Special Olympics games organizing committees, the following are rules to be followed at all Special Olympics competitions:
  - Volunteers and officials may wear jackets, T-shirts, caps and other apparel bearing small and attractively designed identifications of corporate or organizational sponsors, at sports venues.
  - Athletes not in competition and not at sports venues (e.g., at training sessions, practices, trips or away from competition sites) may wear apparel bearing small and attractively designed identifications of corporate or organizational sponsors.
  - Athletes may carry and use non-apparel and non-sports equipment items, such as tote bags, bearing small and attractively designed identifications of corporate or organizational sponsors.
  - Opening and closing ceremonies sites are deemed to have the same status as sports venues during games. Hence, team or delegation members and officials shall not wear warm-up suits, jackets, caps, etc., which bear corporate or organizational identifications which might be considered as advertising.

## Sexual Harassment

All Special Olympics Texas employees, coaches, volunteers and athletes are expected to treat each other with dignity and respect. Special Olympics Texas will not tolerate any form of sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is defined as any unwelcome sexual conduct that 1) creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment; 2) interferes with the performance of any employee, coach, volunteer or athlete, even if no tangible or economic damages result; and 3) is used as a basis for a decision such as hiring, terminating, promoting, assigning responsibilities, making opportunities available or increasing/decreasing compensation or benefits.

For more detailed information on SOTX's sexual harassment policy, please consult SOTX's Employee Handbook. A copy of this manual is available for viewing at each area office, or through the chapter office.

## Guidelines for Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages

The purpose of this policy is to define the very limited parameters by which Special Olympics Texas activities may include consumption or availability of alcoholic beverages. Special Olympics Texas recognizes that the safety and well-being of the athletes, volunteers and staff are of utmost priority, and that the consumption of alcoholic beverages may compromise a person's ability to care for another's well-being. Therefore, the consumption of alcoholic beverages is strictly regulated so as to ensure the safety and well-being of all people. Special Olympics Texas also recognizes that the athletes, coaches, volunteers and employees of Special Olympics Texas may serve as role models in their communities. As role models, the athletes, coaches, volunteers and employees must exhibit Olympic ideals and values and be aware of how their behavior may influence others.

Special Olympics Texas recognizes that the responsible consumption of alcoholic beverages may be an optional component at a very limited number of official receptions or fund raising events. Special Olympics Texas expects all such situations to be conducted in the spirit of moderation and mature judgment. The reputation and future success of the entire Special Olympics Texas program can be affected by the judgment used in such situations. Accidents or injuries resulting from irresponsible alcohol consumption may create a liability for the organization as well as the individuals involved.

For more detailed information on SOTX's policy on guidelines for consumption of alcoholic beverages, please consult SOTX's Employee Handbook, available for viewing at each area office or at the chapter office.

# Animal/Pet Policy

Only certified service animals are allowed at SOTX practices or competitions for safety reasons. Law enforcement will be called if an animal is left in a vehicle during what is considered hazardous or dangerous environmental conditions.



## Policy Regarding Volunteers and Staff Dating Special Olympics Athletes

### Introduction

Among the Special Olympics movement's highest priorities is the well-being of, and respect for the dignity of, Special Olympics athletes. The purpose of this policy is to protect all participants in the Special Olympics movement, including athletes, volunteers and staff, as well as Special Olympics Texas.

Every Special Olympics program must take all reasonable steps to ensure that athletes participating in Special Olympics do so in an environment that is free from abuse, intimidation, fear, pressure or coercion from any person in a position of authority, including Special Olympics staff, coaches and other volunteers. At the same time, Special Olympics respects the right of every Special Olympics athlete to be treated with dignity and to have the same rights as every other human being.

### Policy

Special Olympics prohibits any Special Olympics staff member or volunteer (excluding spouses of athletes and athletes who are Class B volunteers) from dating or having a sexual relationship with any Special Olympics athlete. In the event that Special Olympics Texas learns of any dating or sexual relationship, SOTX immediately shall require either: 1) that the staff member or volunteer end his or her association with Special Olympics; or 2) that the association between the staff member or volunteer and Special Olympics will be terminated.

In the case of a Special Olympics athlete who is also a staff member or Class A volunteer, the SOTX President and CEO must evaluate the circumstances on a case-by-case basis and determine if an authority relationship exists between the staff/volunteer athlete and the competing athlete, and if it is determined that there is such a relationship, then apply the above policy in the same manner as the policy is applied to non-athlete staff or volunteers.

Special Olympics respects the right of athletes to have the full range of human relationships available to other human beings. This policy shall not be interpreted as a limitation on the rights of athletes, but only as a restriction on Special Olympics staff and volunteers.

The terms "Special Olympics athlete" and "athlete" refer to people with intellectual disabilities. The term "volunteer" includes Unified Sports® partners.

## Athlete Recruitment

In keeping with the Special Olympics coaching philosophy of athletes first, winning second, Special Olympics coaches shall not actively recruit athletes from other teams/delegations for the sole purpose of persuading that athlete to leave his/her affiliated delegation with promises of better conditions or other valuable considerations. Coaches who engage in the practice shall be considered to be in violation of the Coaches Code of Conduct Agreement and subject to review.



## Instructions for Athlete Transfers

If an athlete wishes to transfer to another delegation, it is that athlete's responsibility to initiate the transfer.

If an athlete who is not on your team wants to join your team, your first step as a coach is to ask the athlete if they are on another team. If they are, give them the Athlete Transfer Form and tell them their primary coach must sign it first. If they are not on a team or don't know if they are, call the area office to check on their status.

1. Athlete gets a Transfer Request Form and has both the current coach and the new coach sign it.
2. Once both coaches have signed the form, the program/area director must sign the form for final approval.
3. It will be the new coach's responsibility to ensure that the new athlete has the proper medical documents.
4. In cases where there is a disagreement, dispute, or conflict between coaches, the program/area director will have the authority to approve primary team transfers.

The Athlete Transfer Form is a tool and is optional for HoDs or coaches to use unless the program/area director mandates its use due to delegation conflicts.

## Probation or Suspension of a Delegation or Delegation Personnel

Action may be taken by an Area Sports Management Team (ASMT) to either put on probation or suspend a delegation or delegation personnel. Examples of actions that might lead to these steps are (not limited to): not following the policies and procedures of SOTX as outlined in the SOTX Information Guide, sending inflammatory emails or communication toward another delegation, and facilitating external communication with newspapers or television regarding SOTX issues without coordinating with the Vice President of Communications. Depending on the severity of the issues, an ASMT may elect to put the delegation on probation as a warning. If the behavior continues, suspension is an option.

SOTX retains the right to dissolve a delegation if the delegation does not follow the policies and procedures of the organization. If a delegation is put on suspension, the name, logo, and image of that delegation may not be used during the time of the suspension. Parents will be given the options to apply for acceptance within another delegation, or they may apply for a new delegation to be formed. Provisions for formation will be provided depending on the circumstances.

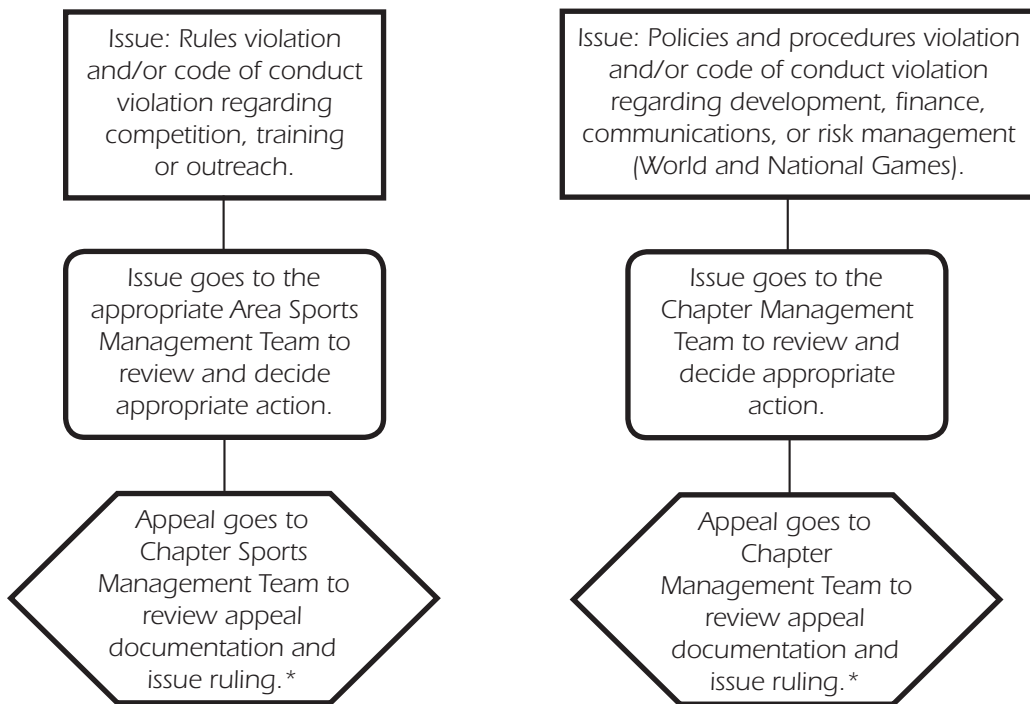
## Conflict Resolution and Appeal Process

SOTX instituted a new Conflict Resolution and Appeal Process, effective January 1, 2010. Depending on the issue, either the Area Sports Management Team or the Chapter Management Team will handle violations regarding sports rules, code of conduct, and organizational policies and procedures issues. The Conflict Resolution Flowchart on the next page depicts which group will respond to the violation.

Appeals of decisions made by the Area Sports Management Team must be sent to the Vice President of Field Services within 14 days of the decision. Appeals of decisions made by the Chapter Management Team must be sent to the President and CEO within 14 days of the decision. (Please refer to the Conflict Resolution Flowchart.)

All appeals will be heard in a closed hearing format. The individual(s) will be allowed to make a presentation which can last up to 10 minutes; additional time will be allowed for questions. Most appeals will be heard via conference call in order to expedite the process. Certified letters will be sent to all parties involved once a decision has been made. All decisions are final.

# Conflict Resolution and Appeal Process Flowchart



Special Olympics Texas, Inc.'s (SOTX) policies and procedures continue to change and evolve as a direct result of our growth, especially in technology, risk management, and fund raising. We continue to always put the needs of our athletes first, and strive to implement organizational processes that hold us all to a high standard in order to best serve our athletes.

In order to more proficiently handle violations of SOTX's rules, codes of conduct, or policies and procedures, two separate entities will handle the issues referenced above in the flowchart:

1. Area Sports Management Team/Area Staff will review: sports rules violations; codes of conduct violations by an athlete, family member, volunteer or coach; coaches education issues; and outreach/athlete recruitment issues. The Chapter Sports Management Team will review appeals.
2. Chapter Management Team will review: policies and procedures issues and codes of conduct violations pertaining to communications, fund raising, finance and risk management. The Chapter Management Team will include additional SOTX staff, volunteers, and athletes, as deemed appropriate, to review appeals.

Each review team will follow conflict resolution guidelines which include a written warning, probation, and suspension from the organization. The frequency and/or severity of the misconduct or violation are factors in determining which level of disciplinary action is required. SOTX reserves the right to immediately suspend an athlete, family member, volunteer, or coach for serious infractions, regardless of conflict resolution guidelines.

\* The Area and Chapter Sports Management Teams and the Chapter Management Team reserve the right to include additional SOTX staff, volunteers, and athletes as part of the review and decision-making process.



# Athlete Transfer Request

I \_\_\_\_\_ (athlete name) request permission to transfer delegations. This transfer will not be permitted unless this form is completed, signed by all required persons and approved by the area/program director. It is the athlete/guardian's responsibility to get the signatures of both the old and the new coaches. The area office will not accept partially completed forms and the athlete cannot play for the new delegation until this form is completed. If the athlete competes with the new delegation before this form is complete or without prior approval from the area office, the athlete will be declared ineligible.

Transfer requested from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Old) Delegation Name (New) Delegation Name

Check one of the choices:  Temporary Transfer  Permanent Transfer

If temporary, what sport?

\_\_\_\_\_

State the reason for the transfer request:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Athlete Date Parent/Guardian (if required) Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Original Coach Date New Coach Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Area/Program Director Date

NOTE:

Original coach refuses to sign transfer form: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date and time of the meeting

Reason for refusal:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_