

UNIFIED SPORTS®

Unified Sports® programs integrate athletes with and without intellectual disabilities in training and competition programs as well as social activities. The three programs that make up the unified activities are:

- Unified Sports®
- Partners Clubs®
- Sports Partnerships > See Section J for more information.

Unified Sports® programs are unique because they:

- Integrate athletes with and without intellectual disabilities in trainings and competitions.
- Prepare athletes with higher skill levels for participation in school and community sports, though it is not exclusive to only athletes of higher ability levels. Athletes of all ability levels are eligible to participate in Unified Sports®.
- Increase the reputation of the Special Olympics program and make the public aware of the skills of the athletes.
- Enable Special Olympics families to participate as team members and coaches on Unified Sports® teams.
- Build friendships and understanding between athletes with and without intellectual disabilities.

Please note that all Unified Sports® partners, participants without intellectual disabilities, must have a completed Application for Participation in Special Olympics (Unified Sports® Partner) Form on file at their respective area offices in order to compete.

Unified Sports® combines approximately equal numbers of athletes with and without intellectual disabilities in a training and competition program. Unified Sports® opportunities are offered in all SOTX sports.

In team sports and racquet sports, athletes and partners should be of similar ages and abilities.

It is the goal of Unified Sports® to integrate into community leagues those athletes with intellectual disabilities who, because of their higher skill level, are ready to move themselves from traditional Special Olympics teams into mainstream athletic programs. Involvement improves skills, self-esteem and self-image for athletes of all ability levels.

Unified Sports® Guidelines

- Each Unified Sports® partner must be a registered SOTX volunteer (must have a current Class A Volunteer Application on file renewed every three years), must have attended General Orientation and Protective Behaviors (in person or online), and must have passed the criminal background check as well as must have a Unified Sports Partner Form on file. This form only needs to be resubmitted or updated if any contact or insurance information changes regarding the partners. NOTE: Minor Unified Sports partners (17 years old or younger) are required to submit a Class A Minor Reference Form, instead of the requirement to pass the criminal background check.
- Head coaches must be “dual certified” – trained in the sport and trained in Unified Sports®. Training includes an eight hour sport-specific training school and a two hour Unified Sports® certification training.
- Coaches should use the player skills assessments tests in their Unified Sports® team selection process for softball, volleyball, basketball and soccer. These tests are found in the Rules Book.
- Unified Sports® player ratios must remain throughout competition.
- Players injured or disqualified may influence a team’s line up. If there are no athletes or Unified Sports® partners to replace their respective teammate, a team can play shorthanded if allowed by that specific sport’s rules. Special Olympics athletes may not substitute for partners, nor can partners substitute for Special Olympics athletes.
- A head of delegation can only compete as a Unified Partner within their own delegation when their team is active in that area or chapter competition. When a delegation is

inactive (not competing in any sport at the area or chapter competition), the head of delegation may choose to volunteer and train as a Unified partner with another delegation other than their own.

- In order to qualify for training, a coach must have coached traditional sports for at least two years.
- Unified Sports® head coaches are allowed to play on a Unified Sports® team, although it is not recommended. However, a dual-certified (sport-specific and Unified Sports®) coach must be on the bench at all times during a game/competition and cannot play in the game at any time in basketball, soccer, softball and volleyball competitions. This coach is responsible for the line up and conduct of the team. The “bench coach” cannot be listed as a player for that game, and he/she can not enter the game as a player. This rule is known as the “bench coach rule.”
- Special Olympics athletes who are certified head coaches are not allowed to play and coach on the same traditional team; however, they may coach and play on the same Unified Sports® team.
- Unified Sports® Code of Conduct must be signed by the coach and be included with competition entry forms.

Starting a Unified Sports® Program

Special Olympics has published the Unified Sports® Handbook, which recommends the following steps in establishing a Unified Sports® program. For more information, please contact your area office.

Organizing a Unified Sports® Team

- In order to participate, a Unified Sports® team must join an existing delegation or create a new delegation.
- Select the sport you will implement.
- Recruit and train coaches.
- Determine the target group for team members.
- Develop a plan to inform schools, agencies or community centers about who may participate.
- Identify eligible people with and without intellectual disabilities to play on the Unified Sports® team.
- Set minimum standards for participation on the team.
- Prepare and distribute practice and competition schedules.
- Hold a team organization meeting.
- Get team uniforms.
- Provide guidance and assistance to the team throughout the season.
- Ensure that Special Olympics competition opportunities exist beyond the local level.
- Evaluate the program.
- Congratulate the efforts of the team and coaches.

Monitor(s) Responsibilities

Pre-Tournament Responsibilities

- Pre-event communication.
- Conducts Unified Sports® coaches breakout meeting.
- Orients certified official and key volunteers of Unified Sports® rules modifications, and supports needs.
- Collects signed Unified Sports® Code of Conduct Agreement forms from all teams.

Pre-Game Responsibilities

- Meets with both certified bench coaches and presiding officials prior to the coin toss start of each competition.

Responsibilities During Game/Competition

- Serves as a resource to on-field officials, but does not interrupt flow of play.
- Monitors competition to ensure that Unified Sports® rules and philosophies are being enforced – checking with scorekeeper when necessary.
- Communicates with certified official at appropriate breaks in play or when approached by officials.

Post-Game Responsibilities

- Debriefs game with officials.

Official(s)

Pre-Tournament Responsibilities

- Gets Unified Sports® training in advance when possible or pre-game at minimum.
- Attends Unified Sports® coaches breakout meeting.

Pre-Game Responsibilities

- Meets with both bench coaches and Unified Sports® monitor(s) prior to coin toss start of each competition.

Responsibilities During Game/Competition

- Serves as on field authority of rules.
- Makes all judgment calls regarding dominance on the field.
- Confers with Unified Sports® monitor(s) when necessary.
- Communicates with coaches regarding Unified Sports® rules interpretations and consequences during a game.

Post-Game Responsibilities

- Debriefs game with Unified Sports® monitor(s).

Score Keeper(s)

Pre-Game Responsibilities

- Meets with Unified Sports® monitor(s) to be clear on unified rules/responsibilities.
- Reviews rosters/lineups to ensure that they are correct.

Responsibilities During Game/Competition

- Maintains rosters and scoring throughout the game and is a resource of information for officials and Unified Sports® monitor(s).
- Informs officials immediately if the ratio is not maintained.

Post-Game Responsibilities

- Be available if needed for debriefing.

Unified Sports® Basketball

- Teams follow NFHS and Special Olympics rules.
- Partners, people without intellectual disabilities, must be identified on lineups and lineups must be exchanged between coaches.
- Teams must have three athletes and two partners on the court at all times. If the ratio is not maintained at anytime, the team not in compliance must forfeit.
- A non-playing, dual-certified bench coach must be designated at the beginning of the match. The coach may not be listed as a player for that game or enter the game as a player.
- Dominant play: will be a judgment call determined by the officials on the court. Penalty will be a verbal warning and subsequent calls will result in a technical foul on the offending player.

Dominant play is defined as: an action or play by a player that does not allow another teammate to play their position. All players shall be allowed meaningful involvement and play.

Unified Sports® Soccer

- Teams follow FIFA and Special Olympics rules.
- Partners, people without intellectual disabilities, must be identified on lineups and lineups must be exchanged between coaches.
- Teams must have three athletes and two partners on the court at all times. If the ratio is not maintained at anytime, the team not in compliance must forfeit.
- A non-playing, dual-certified bench coach must be designated at the beginning of the match. The coach may not be listed as a player for that game or enter the game as a player.
- Dominant play will be a judgment call determined by the officials on the field. Penalty will be a verbal warning and subsequent calls will result in a yellow card on the offending player.

Dominant play is defined as: an action or play by a player that does not allow another teammate to play their position. All players shall be allowed meaningful involvement and play.

Unified Sports® Softball

- Teams follow all ASA and Special Olympics rules.
- Partners, people without intellectual disabilities, must be identified on lineups and lineups must be exchanged between coaches.
- Teams must have five Special Olympics athletes and five partners on the field at all times.
- Athletes and partners must be in the following fielding positions:
 - Outfield: Two Special Olympics athletes and two partners.
 - Infield: Two Special Olympics athletes and two partners.
 - Pitcher/catcher must be athlete/partner or partner/athlete.
- If at anytime, field positions are not correct, the game will be stopped and players placed in the proper positions.
- Athletes and partners must alternate in the batting order.
- If a team uses an extra player they must use two (one athlete and one partner).
- Score keeper must keep up with substitutes. The athletes may only substitute for athletes and partners only for partners. If at any time ratio is not maintained, it will be an automatic forfeit.
- A non-playing, dual-certified bench coach must be designated at the beginning of the game. This coach may not be listed as a player for that game or enter that game as a player.
- Dominant play will be a judgment call and will be made by the umpires on the field. Dominant play would be ruled as an obstruction penalty as per "points of emphasis" number 30.

Dominant play is defined as: an action or play by a player that does not allow another player to field/play their position. All players shall be allowed meaningful involvement and play.

Unified Sports® Volleyball

- Teams follow all USVBA and Special Olympics rules.
- Partners, people without intellectual disabilities, must be identified on lineups and lineups must be exchanged between coaches.
- Teams must have three Special Olympics athletes and three partners on the court at all times. If at anytime during competition the ratio is not maintained, it will be an automatic forfeit.
- Athletes and partners must be in alternate positions.
- A non-playing, dual certified bench coach must be designated at the beginning of the

match. The coach may not be listed as a player for that match or enter that match as a player.

- Dominant play will be a judgment call and will be made by the officials on the court. Penalty for dominant play would be as per rule 24.2.2 "Misconduct Penalty."

Dominant play is defined as: an action or play by a player that does not allow another player to field/play their position. All players shall be allowed meaningful involvement and play.

Unified Sports® Golf

All partners must have a Unified Sports® Partner Form on file with the chapter office. This requirement even applies to those partners who are playing Level 2 Alternate Shot Team Play (formerly known as Partners Team Competition).

This level of play is designed to give the Special Olympics golfer an opportunity for transition from skill to individual play, and progress under the guidance of a partner whose ability and knowledge of golf is more advanced than that of the Special Olympics athlete. As a result, this level does not function in the traditional Unified Sports® model where teammates are expected to be of similar ability. The partner serves as a coach and mentor, so that the Special Olympics golfer becomes self sufficient on the golf course.

Divisioning Unified Sports®

Competition Awards Guidelines Regarding Crossover Division with Traditional Teams

Unified Sports® Teams in Traditional Divisions

Due to their ability level or a significant safety risk (sometimes due to age), there will be times that a Unified Sports® team will not fit appropriately in a Unified Sports® division.

A competition director has discretion to provide Unified Sports® teams with competition against other traditional Special Olympics teams when, as an only option for safe and/or appropriate competition, there is nothing available in the Unified Sports® division.

Should this take place, the Unified Sports® team shall not affect the record or advancement of the other traditional teams in that division. The games are officiated under the rules of tradition, but Unified Sports® teams are encouraged to maintain their lineups to reflect Unified Sports® rules whenever possible.

The Unified Sports® team(s) that compete in traditional divisions shall be awarded separately, thus not affecting the awards outcome of their traditional opponents.

Unified Teams in Unified Sports® Divisions

There are also times when a traditional team will be placed in a Unified Sports® division due to their ability level, safety risk or significant age difference with other traditional teams, but this usually occurs when there are one or two traditional teams that are significantly higher in ability than the rest of the teams in the competition.

A competition director has discretion to provide traditional teams with competition against other Unified Sports® teams when, as an only option for safe and/or appropriate competition, there is nothing available in the traditional divisions.

Should this take place, the traditional team shall not affect the record or advancement of the other traditional teams in that division. The games are officiated under the rules of Unified Sports® where applicable. Obviously, a traditional team will not be able to meet the lineup criteria and some of the other rules specific to dominance related issues.

The traditional team(s) that compete in Unified Sports® divisions shall be awarded separately, thus not affecting the awards outcome of their Unified Sports® opponents.

Unified Sports® Basketball Scoring Aid

Score	25%	75%	Score	25%	75%
4	1.0	3.0	52	13.0	39.0
5	1.3	3.8	53	13.3	39.8
6	1.5	4.5	54	13.5	40.5
7	1.8	5.3	55	13.8	41.3
8	2.0	6.0	56	14.0	42.0
9	2.3	6.8	57	14.3	42.8
10	2.5	7.5	58	14.5	43.5
11	2.8	8.3	59	14.8	44.3
12	3.0	9.0	60	15.0	45.0
13	3.3	9.8	61	15.3	45.8
14	3.5	10.5	62	15.5	46.5
15	3.8	11.3	63	15.8	47.3
16	4.0	12.0	64	16.0	48.0
17	4.3	12.8	65	16.3	48.8
18	4.5	13.5	66	16.5	49.5
19	4.8	14.3	67	16.8	50.3
20	5.0	15.0	68	17.0	51.0
21	5.3	15.8	69	17.3	51.8
22	5.5	16.5	70	17.5	52.5
23	5.8	17.3	71	17.8	53.3
24	6.0	18.0	72	18.0	54.0
25	6.3	18.8	73	18.3	54.8
26	6.5	19.5	74	18.5	55.5
27	6.8	20.3	75	18.8	56.3
28	7.0	21.0	76	19.0	57.0
29	7.3	21.8	77	19.3	57.8
30	7.5	22.5	78	19.5	58.5
31	7.8	23.3	79	19.8	59.3
32	8.0	24.0	80	20.0	60.0
33	8.3	24.8	81	20.3	60.8
34	8.5	25.5	82	20.5	61.5
35	8.8	26.3	83	20.8	62.3
36	9.0	27.0	84	21.0	63.0
37	9.3	27.8	85	21.3	63.8
38	9.5	28.5	86	21.5	64.5
39	9.8	29.3	87	21.8	65.3
40	10.0	30.0	88	22.0	66.0
41	10.3	30.8	89	22.3	66.8
42	10.5	31.5	90	22.5	67.5
43	10.8	32.3	91	22.8	68.3
44	11.0	33.0	92	23.0	69.0
45	11.3	33.8	93	23.3	69.8
46	11.5	34.5	94	23.5	70.5
47	11.8	35.3	95	23.8	71.3
48	12.0	36.0	96	24.0	72.0
49	12.3	36.8	97	24.3	72.8
50	12.5	37.5	98	24.5	73.5
51	12.8	38.3	99	24.8	74.3

Special Olympics Texas Unified Sports®

Competitions Code of Conduct Agreement

Special Olympics Unified Sports® was established in the late 1980s. As this program continues to grow it is critical that teams understand and abide by the Special Olympics Unified Sports® rules and that programs and spectators see the correct presentation of Unified Sports® competition. The following must be understood, implemented and adhered to by teams sending athletes and partners to Unified Sports® competitions.

1. Unified Sports® teams shall be made up of athletes with intellectual disabilities, and partners, athletes without intellectual disabilities, whom are similar in age and ability.
2. No player shall be selected for a team who has an ability level that is significantly higher or lower than other players on the team.
3. The composition of Unified Sports® teams shall not include players who, because of their disproportionate ability level to their teammates, are able to dominate play, exclude other teammates from contributing to the success of the team, or present a health and safety risk on the field of play.
4. Special Olympics programs understand that the intent and spirit of Unified Sports® is to have teams that have balanced skill levels so that everyone can safely and meaningfully participate. This is meant to demonstrate the contributions of athletes with intellectual disabilities and their ability to successfully compete with their peers without intellectual disabilities.

The intent of Unified Sports® is to provide opportunities for Special Olympics athletes to play side by side, at the same skill level with their peer athletes, without intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics Unified Sports® is designed to provide all athletes with a meaningful opportunity to contribute to the success of the team without accommodation by other members of the team.

Teams not in compliance will be subjected to consequences, including forfeiture of play.

I have read the above memorandum and pledge that I have created our team in accordance with the Special Olympics Unified Sports® program model. I understand the rules, philosophy and intent of this program and pledge to abide by these guiding policies and principles.

Signature of Head Coach Unified Sports®

Team Name and Sport

Signature of Head of Delegation

Name of Delegation

Delegation ID

NOTE: The head of delegation only needs to submit one copy of the form per event not for each Unified Sports® partner.

Unified Sports® Partner Application Entry Form

Release and Waiver of Liability, Assumption of Risk and Indemnity Agreement

SECTION A - Unified Sports® Partner Information

Delegation:		Area:	
Partner SSN: - -	Sex/Gender:	DOB (mm/dd/yyyy):	
Partner Name:		E-mail Address:	
Address:		Day Phone: ()	
City:	St:	ZIP:	Night Phone: ()
Health/Accident Company:		Policy #:	
Parent/Guardian Name:		Day Phone: ()	
Address (if different than partner):		Night Phone: ()	
City:	St:	ZIP:	Day Phone: ()
Emergency Contact (if other than parent/guardian):		Night Phone: ()	

SECTION B - Special Olympics Release and Waiver of Liability

In consideration of participating in Special Olympics Unified Sports®, I represent that I understand the nature of the event and that I (and/or my minor child) am (are/is) qualified, in good health and in proper physical condition to participate in Unified Sports® events. I fully understand the event involves risks of serious bodily injury, which may be caused by my own actions or inactions, by the actions of others participating in the event or by conditions in which the event takes place. I fully accept and assume all such risks and all responsibility losses, costs and/or damages I (and/or my minor child) may incur as a result of my (and/or my minor child's) participation. I acknowledge that at any time if I (we) feel that the event conditions are unsafe, I (and/or my minor child) will discontinue participation immediately.

If during my participation in Special Olympics activities I should need emergency medical treatment and I (and/or my minor child) am (are/is) not able to give my consent for or make my own arrangements for that treatment because of my injuries, I authorize Special Olympics to take whatever measures are necessary to protect my health and well-being, including, if necessary, hospitalization.

I (and/or my minor child) release, indemnify, covenant not to sue and hold harmless Special Olympics, its administrators, directors, agents, officers, volunteers, employees and other Unified Sports® participants, and sponsors, advertisers, and if applicable, any owners and lessors of premises on which the activity takes place from all liability, any losses, claims (other than that of medical accident benefit), demands, costs, or damages that I (and/or my minor child) may incur as a result of participation in Unified Sports® events and further agree that if, despite this Release and Waiver of Liability, Assumption of Risk and Indemnity Agreement, I, or anyone on my behalf makes a claim against any of the Releases, I will indemnify, save, and hold harmless each of the Releases from any litigation expenses, attorney fees, loss, liability, damage, or cost which may incur as a result of such claim.

I have read the Release and Waiver of Liability, Assumption of Risk and Indemnity Agreement and fully understand it.

Signature of Unified Sports® Partner

Date

Signature of Parent or Guardian (if Partner is a Minor)

Date