



Supplemental Document to Athlete Nomination Criteria

Introduction: Once every 4 years, Special Olympics athletes in the United States are provided the opportunity to represent our country at the highest level of competition - World Games (respectively for Summer & Winter Games)! Undoubtedly, one of the highest levels of privilege and opportunity for any Special Olympics athlete. In theory we would like to believe that consideration for selection for a World Games event should be afforded to every Special Olympics athlete. However due to many factors and considerations there is a need to better “screen” athletes who are selected to ensure that each athlete, coach, management team member and volunteer can achieve the best experience possible.

Factors/considerations that make the World Games experience not only unique but challenging;

- Length of Games – the World Games experience can involve anywhere from 18-21 days. The length of time required depends on the location of the Games and the pre-Games experience. For many Special Olympics athletes, this length of time away from home can prove to be a challenge.
- Time Away from Parents/Family – Because of the structure of the U.S. Team, athletes chosen can expect to be away from their families for extended periods of time without seeing them and at times, with very limited contact. For some athletes this can cause stress and anxiety.
- Adjusting to New Coaches – Coaches selected for the U.S. Team come from all across the country and it is rare for a World Games athlete to already know one of these coaches. Can the athlete adapt to a new coach?
- Conform to the Group/Adaptability – In order for the U.S. Team to function well, all members must adhere to team rules and the team schedules. Often times this means that a sport team may need to adhere to a schedule as a group – meaning an athlete cannot direct his/her own schedule. In addition, there will be times when schedules change with little or no notice and athletes must be able to adapt accordingly.
- The Disruptive Parent – it is equally important that parents/guardians are comfortable being away from their athlete for extended periods of time and with limited contact. They should not expect “special” considerations for their athlete or for a particular situation. Parents/family members need to embrace and respect the U.S. Team rules and understand that their potential insistence to be involved with the team and/or their athlete could be very disruptive.
- Daily Living Skills – Athletes must be able to independently handle all toileting, showering and daily hygiene needs. Coaches can easily provide reminders to take care of these items but athletes must be able to attend to these needs on their own in an efficient time frame. Athletes must be able to share living space with other team members.

NOTE: Coach to Athlete Ratio – The coach to athlete ratio for Special Olympics USA is set for each World Games by the host country Games Organizing Committee. In most instances, the ratio is one (1) coach per four (4) athletes. This established ratio means that if an athlete requires a significant level of assistance, there will be three other athletes receiving less supervision – this could lead to additional health and safety issues.

- Food/Diet – While accommodations are made for dietary restrictions such as diabetes, gluten-free, etc. special considerations should not be expected for “picky” eaters. Often athletes will dine in settings which involve planned meals served to the group and while there will often be choices, it will be limited. Or, the cuisine will be indicative of the country. There should be no expectations that special efforts will be made to provide certain types of food.
- Selecting Athletes Who Are Appropriate for the Sport and/or Events - Every effort should be made to ensure that every athlete being considered for selection has trained and competed in his/her sport and the specific/identified events in that sport for at least a minimum of 2 years and is also well-trained and ready for World level competition.
- Travel and Long Days – Most likely the distance required to travel to World Games destinations will be long and could require several days. Many times this travel will involve many modes of transportation; airplane, bus and train. In addition to the travel days being long, the actual Games days will be long as well. It is realistic to expect 12-15 hour days – can the athlete being considered handle this for an extended period of time? The general fitness of the athlete should be considered. Does the athlete have a general fitness level that will allow them to walk for extended periods of time over various distances, multiple days?

Each of the factors and scenarios are based on past Games experiences and are a true reflection of what a World Games trip will entail. It is expected that every state program will administer a vetting process that will allow the respective state staff personnel to make the most qualified decision about final selection of athletes.

Additional suggestions:

- Once nomination paperwork is received, each athlete should be vetted.
- If the athlete is known well-enough at the state-level and you already know an athlete has a history of behavior issues, is poorly trained, etc. And you know they are not qualified to represent your state program or the US delegation, do not move them forward in the process.
- If the state staff is not familiar with the athlete, please take the time to vet through conversations with the local coach, Area Directors and parents. While on the surface they will all say they want this experience for the athlete, help them completely understand what a World Games experience really entails – consider all the items listed.

6/9/2016

U.S.A. Games As Advancement Criteria
for Athlete Nomination To Special Olympics U.S.A.
2019 Special Olympics World Summer Games

NOTE: All accredited U.S. Programs in good standing with SOI are eligible to submit a Program Specific quota request to Special Olympics USA for the 2019 Special Olympics World Summer Games. Special Olympics USA will submit a comprehensive quota request to SOI on behalf of the U.S. Programs and in turn, assign sport-specific quota allocations to each U.S. Program submitting a request, based upon the overall allocation from SOI.

- The top priority for U.S. Programs is to identify eligible athletes and Unified partners that are to be entered into their Program-specific random selection draw for the Special Olympics USA Delegation, with the understanding that Programs shall select from a pool of athletes that successfully participated in the 2018 USA Summer Games.
- For those sports offered at the 2018 Special Olympics USA Summer Games, Programs must have athletes and/or Unified partners competing in those sports should they desire to request quota slots from Special Olympics USA in those sports.
- Should Special Olympics USA elect to ask for quota in sports not offered at the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games, but offered at the 2019 Special Olympics Summer World Games, the athletes and Unified partners for these sports/events will be selected utilizing the Advancement Criteria addressed within Article I.
- To be eligible for the Program's random selection draw, an athlete and Unified partner must have won a gold, silver or bronze medal in at least 1 event within their sport, with the exception of relays, and category/level, if applicable, and are age 16 or older.
- US Programs not attending the 2018 Special Olympics USA Summer Games due to a hardship may request an exemption, from SONA, to the Advancement Criteria through the USLC Sports Committee and SONA.
- Upon the conclusion of the USA Games, Programs will be provided the results for their Delegation or receive a link to obtain the results of the Games for their athletes.
- Immediately upon your return home from the U.S.A. Games, illicit feedback from the Program's HOD, AHOD and coaches about the appropriateness of the athletes for their participation in the World Games. Contact the families and athletes to ensure they are interested in going to the World Games, if drawn. Please reference the attached Supplement to Athlete Selection as this document will assist you in working through this process.

- If the Program has determined an athlete does not meet the nomination criteria for World Games, then remove them from consideration prior to the random draw. (Should an athlete be considered borderline, wait until after the random draw and then follow-up if the athlete is actually drawn.)
- Athletes will be randomly selected by a Program from their eligible athletes (if they exist) to fill their Program's Special Olympics USA quota for each sport. The random selection draw will occur by sport, by gender, by event category. The random selection draw shall be conducted as follows:

Randomly select athletes from the Program's Gold Medal finishers from all divisions of the sport from the 2018 Special Olympics USA Games. If no Gold Medal finishers are available, then use the Silver Medal winners and if no Silver winners, use your Bronze medalists. Should the Program not have an appropriate athlete from the Gold-Bronze winners, the Program shall follow the same process for place ribbon winners.

Following the Program's random selection for athletes' to fill their assigned World Games quota, the Program does not feel any selected athlete fits the nomination criteria for selection to the Special Olympics USA Delegation, the Program may select an athlete from their total athlete pool utilizing the Advancement Criteria addressed within Article 1.

- Athletes are eligible to be placed in the pool for each category in which they qualify for an event. Example – If an athlete received a gold medal in the 100M freestyle and 200M freestyle, they are eligible for the Category 2 and Category 3 random selection in Aquatics. In this instance, the athlete may be placed in the Category which best fits their competitive skill level.
- Once all US Programs have returned their accepted quota sheets and any returned quota is redistributed, Special Olympics U.S.A. will proceed with preparations to participate in the Summer World Games.

The Special Olympics USA athlete nomination criteria will still be enforced and it is important to remember that an athlete's participation is contingent upon meeting the National Team's expectations and goals and athletes may be removed from the SO USA team at any time if these are not met or achieved.

NOTE: This document is a living document and will be evaluated after each usage for its effectiveness. Please understand the process may vary from Games to Games depending on the location and time of the year the Games are held.

