



# **Special Olympics** *Iowa*



## **General Orientation**

**Special Olympics Iowa**  
**551 SE Dovetail Road**  
**P.O. Box 620**  
**Grimes, IA 50111-0620**  
**Phone: (515) 986-5520**  
**Fax: (515) 986-5530**  
**[www.soioda.org](http://www.soioda.org)**

*Please take this guide with you  
and review the contents prior to  
each volunteer assignment.*

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**



**Special Olympics**  
*Iowa*

## **General Orientation Agenda**

**General Orientation is designed to be an overview of Special Olympics on both a national and local level.**

***Be sure to take the General Orientation Quiz, and return to the Rhonda Schwarzkopf to fulfill your General Orientation requirement in becoming a Special Olympics Certified Coach!***

**Introduction** What does Special Olympics Mean to Athletes around the World?

**Section I** Overview of Special Olympics and Special Olympics Iowa

- Special Olympics Mission, Vision, Philosophy and Goals
- Special Olympics Iowa Values
- Special Olympics and Special Olympics Iowa History

**Section II** Special Olympics Iowa Organization

- Special Olympics, Inc.
- Role of Accredited Programs
- Special Olympics Iowa Structure
- Special Olympics Iowa Staff and Board of Directors
- Special Olympics Iowa Area Map
- Special Olympics Iowa Area Directors

**Section III** Special Olympics and Special Olympics Iowa Volunteer Information

- Roles for the Special Olympics Volunteer
- Potential Special Olympics Volunteer Roles
- Volunteer Screening and Requirements
- Volunteer Screening Processes
- Protective Behaviors
- Language Guidelines
  - Appropriate Terminology
  - Terminology to Avoid

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

## **General Orientation Agenda (Continued)**

- Section IV** Coaches’ Training
- Head Coach Job Description
  - Guidelines for Parents Attending Competitions
  - How to Become a Special Olympics Iowa Certified Coach
  - Special Olympics Iowa Coaches Training
- Section V** Intellectual Disabilities
- What is the definition of intellectual disability?
  - How prevalent are intellectual disabilities?
  - Facts about intellectual disabilities
- Section VI** Information on Athletes and Athlete Participation
- Athlete membership
  - Statement of Eligibility for Special Olympics
    - Participation by individuals with Down syndrome who have Atlanto-axial Instability
- Section VII** Sports and Competition
- Sports Training and Competition
    - Uniqueness From Other Sports Organizations
    - Special Olympics Games and Competitions
    - Official and Recognized Sports of Special Olympics
    - Special Olympics Opportunities for Athletes of All Abilities
    - Sport Rules
    - Special Olympics Games and Competitions at All Levels
    - Rules for Official Sports
    - Rules of Sports Federations
  - Levels of Competition
  - Criteria for Athletes to Compete
  - Honest Effort/20% Rule
  - Procedures for Divisioning
- Section VIII** Opportunities for Involvement by Athletes and Potential Athletes of ALL Abilities
- Special Olympics Unified Sports
  - Healthy Athletes
  - Global Messenger Training and Athlete Leadership Workshop
  - Play Activity Days
  - Motors Activities Training Program
  - Challenge Days

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

## **Introduction:**

### **What does Special Olympics Mean to Athletes around the World?**

Special Olympics is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities to become physically fit, productive and respected members of society through sports training and competition. Special Olympics offer children and adults with intellectual disabilities year-round training and competition in 26 Olympic-type sports. There is no charge to participate in Special Olympics.

Worldwide, Special Olympics currently serve more than 2.5 million persons with intellectual disabilities in more than 200 programs in 165 countries. Children and adults with intellectual disabilities who participate in Special Olympics develop improved physical fitness and motor skills, greater self-confidence and a more positive self-image.

They grow mentally, socially and spiritually and, through their activities, exhibit boundless courage and enthusiasm, enjoy the rewards of friendship and ultimately discover not only new abilities and talents but "their voices" as well.

Since its beginning in 1968, Special Olympics sharpened the focus on its mission as not just "nice," but critical, not just as a sports organization for people with intellectual disabilities, but also as an effective catalyst for social change.

Special Olympics can play an important role in everyone's life. Through sports, Special Olympics athletes change people's perception of their abilities. And when communities interact with athletes, stereotypes of people with intellectual disabilities give way to acceptance and positive attitudes. Changing attitudes toward people with intellectual disabilities is a top priority for Special Olympics

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

## **Section I:** **Overview of Special Olympics and Special Olympics Iowa**

### **Mission of Special Olympics**

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competitions in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendships with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

### **Vision of Special Olympics**

Special Olympics is an unprecedented global movement which, through quality sports training and competition, improves the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and in turn, the lives of everyone they touch.

- Special Olympics empowers people with intellectual disabilities to realize their full potential and develop their skills through year-round sports training and competition.
- As a result, Special Olympics athletes become fulfilled and productive members of their families and the communities in which they live.
- Special Olympics is an experience that is energizing, healthy, skillful, welcoming and joyful.

### **Special Olympics Philosophy**

Special Olympics is founded on the belief that people with intellectual disabilities can with proper instruction and encouragement, learn, enjoy and benefit from participation in individual and team sports.

Special Olympics believes that consistent training is essential to the development of sports skills, and that 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 believes that through sports training and competition, people with intellectual disabilities benefit physically, mentally, socially and spiritually; families are strengthened; and the community at large, both through participation and observation, is united in understanding people with intellectual disabilities in an environment of equality, respect and acceptance.

### **Special Olympics Goals**

The Special Olympics movement aims to achieve quality growth by creating innovative opportunities to bring the Special Olympics experience to more of the world’s 190 million people with intellectual disabilities. At the same time, Special Olympics will work to create a positive public attitude toward a population that is often rejected or forgotten.

We will promote global athlete leadership and dedicate the movement to empowerment and dignity, not charity.

We will change negative attitudes and misperceptions about people with intellectual disabilities, replacing stigma and rejection with an emphasis on potential, ability and acceptance.

Special Olympics Iowa is “**endorsed by the Iowa Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.**”

### **Special Olympics Iowa Values:**

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Respect:</b>        | Valuing and accepting human differences and the unique abilities of all people in our communities. |
| <b>Accomplishment:</b> | Celebrating the fulfillment of individual potential.   |
| <b>Choice:</b>         | Providing opportunities for self-determination.  |
| <b>Quality:</b>        | Striving for excellence in all we do.  |
| <b>Partnership:</b>    | Achieving more than we can alone by collaborating with others.                                     |
| <b>Integrity:</b>      | Fostering a culture based on the highest standards of personal and professional principles.        |

## **Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

### **Special Olympics and Special Olympics Iowa History**

#### **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.

#### **July 19-20, 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. Iowa was one of those states taking a team from Burlington.

#### **May 1968**

Maureen Soliday, first Executive Director for Special Olympics Iowa, and the Knights of Columbus were the guiding foundation. We started with less than 100 athletes and have grown to well over 14,000 today.

#### **December 1971**

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

#### **February 5-11, 1977**

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

#### **1980-81**

Special Olympics launches a training and certification program for coaches publishing the first Sports Guides.

#### **July 1988**

Special Olympics Unified Sports® was launched at the annual conference in Reno, Nevada.

#### **March 20-27, 1993**

The eighth Special Olympics World Winter Games are held in Salzburg and Schladming, Austria.

#### **May 20-23, 2000**

The first-ever Global Athlete Congress takes place in The Hague.

#### **July 2-7, 2006**

The first-ever USA National Games are held in Ames, Iowa.

The Special Olympics Iowa State Office is located in Grimes and operates with 13 full-time staff members and is governed by a 24-member volunteer Board of Directors. The state is divided into 11 geographical areas, enabling our program to reach all 99 counties. Each area is served by a volunteer director that arranges volunteers, coaches, use of facilities, fundraising and publicity for local and area events.

During the past year, approximately 11,000 Special Olympics athletes participated in year-round local, area and state events. Special Olympics Iowa sponsors bowling, flag football, and volleyball in the Fall; ice skating, cross country skiing, downhill skiing, snowshoeing, basketball, power lifting, gymnastics, and cheerleading in the Winter; swimming, track and field, cycling, tennis, bocce, roller skating and soccer in the Spring; golf, equestrian, and softball in the Summer. Our special programs include: Unified Sports®, Challenge Days, Young Athletes, Global Messengers, and Healthy Athletes.

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

**Section II:**  
**Special Olympics Iowa Organization**

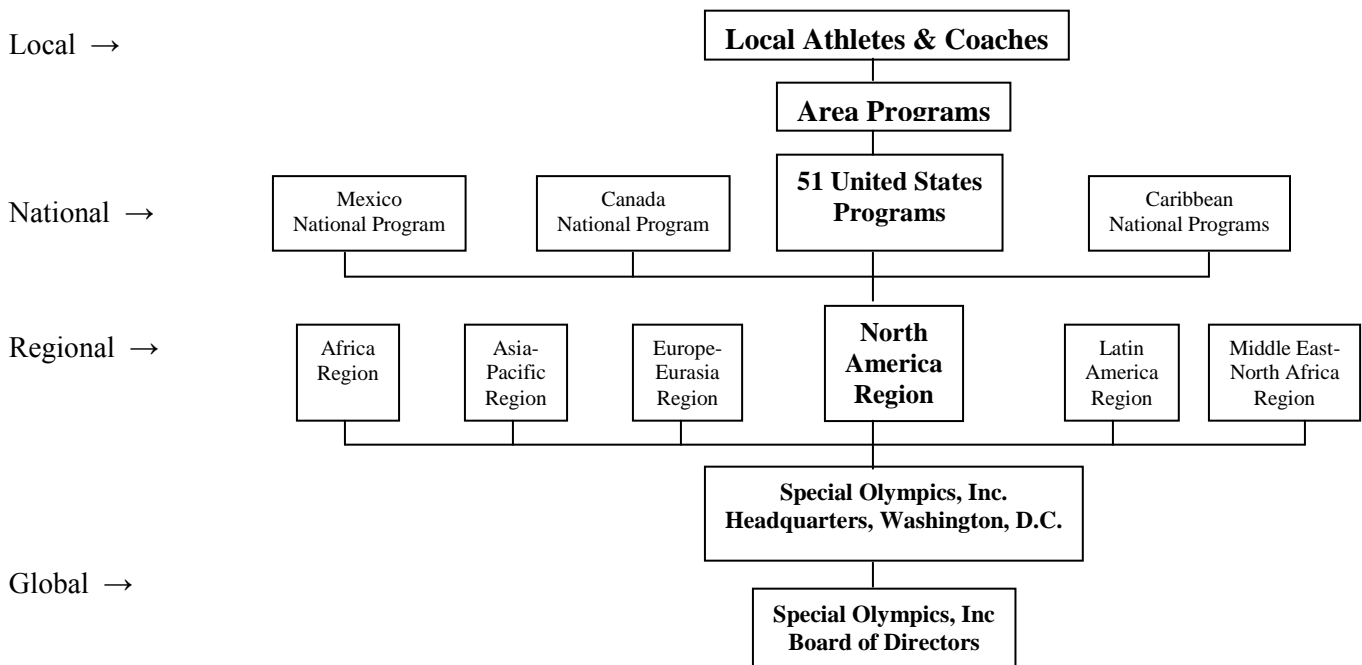
**Special Olympics, Inc.**

Special Olympics, Inc. has the right and the responsibility to ensure that all sports training and competition offered to persons with intellectual disability under the name or auspices of “Special Olympics” are organized, financed and conducted in accordance with uniform international standards, and in a manner that preserves the quality and reputation of Special Olympics and best serves the interests of persons with intellectual disabilities worldwide. To that end, SOI has the authority to interpret, issue and periodically amend or update the General Rules and the other Uniform Standards as well as other written policies on matters covering the entire scope of the Special Olympics Movement including, to the extent necessary in SOI’s judgment, authority on all matters affecting the organization accreditation, financing and conduct of Accredited Programs and other Special Olympics programs rests with SOI as the creator, developer, and world governing body for Special Olympics.

**Role of Accredited Programs**

SOI licenses and accredits qualified Programs throughout the world to operate Special Olympics training and competition programs within their respective geographic boundaries. To the extent permitted by the General Rules, Accredited Programs may, in turn, directly operate, or license and accredit other qualified organizations to operate local Sub-Programs within their respective geographical jurisdictions.

**Special Olympics Organizational Structure**



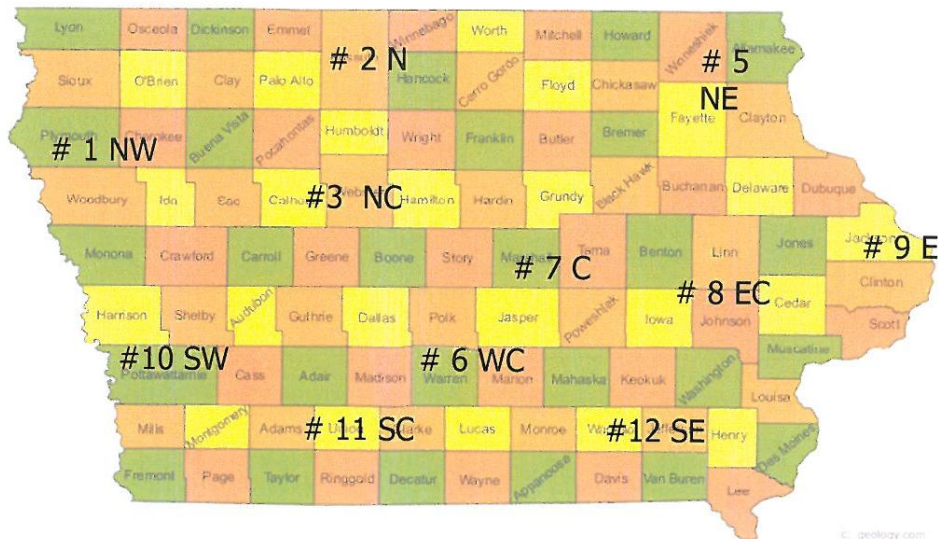
**Special Olympics Iowa Structure**

Special Olympics Iowa is the accredited Special Olympics program for the state of Iowa. Special Olympics Iowa is based in Grimes, Iowa, and is currently directed by a staff of 13 with the assistance of 11 volunteer Area Directors.

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

**Special Olympics Iowa Area Map**

Adams..... SC	Floyd.....N	Monroe ..... SE
Adair..... SC	Franklin.....NC	Monona ..... NW
Allamakee..... SE	Freemont.....SW	Montgomery ..... SC
Appanoose ..... SE	Greene.....NC	Muscatine .....E
Audubon ..... WC	Grundy .....NE	O'Brien ..... NW
Benton..... EC	Guthrie.....WC	Osceola..... NW
Black Hawk ..... NE	Hamilton .....NC	Page..... S C
Boone ..... WC	Hancock .....N	Palo Alto..... N
Bremer ..... NE	Harrison .....SW	Plymouth .....NW
Buchanan ..... NE	Hardin.....C	Pocahontas ..... NC
Buena Vista ..... NC	Henry.....SE	Polk ..... WC
Butler..... NE	Howard .....NE	Pottawattamie.....SW
Calhoun ..... NC	Humboldt .....NC	Poweshiek ..... C
Carroll..... WC	Ida .....NW	Ringgold..... SC
Cass ..... SC	Iowa .....EC	Sac ..... NC
Cedar ..... EC	Jackson.....E	Scott.....E
Cerro Gordo..... N	Jasper .....C	Shelby.....SW
Cherokee .....NW	Jefferson.....SE	Sioux ..... NW
Chickasaw .....NE	Johnson.....EC	Story ..... C
Clarke: .....SC	Jones.....EC	Tama..... C
Clay.....N	Keokuk.....SE	Taylor ..... SC
Clayton ..... NE	Kossuth.....N	Union..... SC
Clinton ..... E	Lee .....SE	VanBuren ..... SE
Crawford..... NW	Linn.....EC	Wapello ..... SE
Dallas..... WC	Louisa .....E	Warren..... WC
Davis..... SE	Lucas.....SE	Washington ..... EC
Decatur ..... S C	Lyon.....NW	Wayne ..... SE
Delaware..... NE	Madison ..... SC	Webster ..... NC
Des Moines, ..... SE	Mahaska .....SE	Winnebago.....N
Dickinson .....N	Marion.....WC	Winneskiek.....NE
Dubuque. . . . .E	Marshall .....C	Woodbury.....NW
Emmett .....E	Mills .....SW	Worth ..... N
Fayette .....NE	Mitchell.....N	Wright.....NC



**Iowa Counties designated by Areas for Special Olympics Iowa**

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

**Area Directors**

Area Directors are volunteer leaders who ensure that quality Special Olympics sports training programs and athletic competition events are available to all eligible individuals in a specific geographic location.

**Northwest Area**

**Peg Koele**

1323 2<sup>nd</sup> St.  
Hull, IA 51239  
Home: (712) 439-2931  
Fax: (712) 476-2125  
E-mail: penn@mtcnet.net

**North Area**

**Holly Jane Kusserow-Smith**

145 East K Street  
Forest City, IA 50436  
Home: (641) 582-4620  
E-mail: [hkusserowsmidt@forestcity.k12.ia.us](mailto:hkusserowsmidt@forestcity.k12.ia.us)

**North Central**

**Co-Director: Liz Rusher**

2264 180th St. Scenic Valley  
Fort Dodge, IA 50501  
Bus.: (515) 5745623  
Cell: (515) 571-6695  
Fax: (515) 576-8774  
E-mail: [rushers@msn.com](mailto:rushers@msn.com)  
E-mail: [erusher@fort-dodge.k12.ia.us](mailto:erusher@fort-dodge.k12.ia.us)

**North Central**

**Co-Director: Lee Decicco**

1320 4th Ave. South  
Fort Dodge, IA 50501  
Bus.: (515) 574-5811  
E-mail: [ldecicco@mediacombb.net](mailto:ldecicco@mediacombb.net)

**Northeast Area**

**Joe and Eileen Wilson**

2718 Ryan Drive  
Cedar Falls, IA 50613  
Home: (319) 266-3613  
Fax: (319) 266-1751  
E-mail: [eileen.wilson@juno.com](mailto:eileen.wilson@juno.com)  
[joe.wilson@uni.edu](mailto:joe.wilson@uni.edu)

**West Central**

**Debby Eldred**

Smouse School  
2820 Center  
Des Moines, IA 50312  
Bus.: (515) 242-8210  
Home: (515) 221-2382  
Fax: (515) 242-8214  
E-mail: [Deborah.Eldred@dmpls.k12.ia.us](mailto:Deborah.Eldred@dmpls.k12.ia.us)  
E-mail summer: [debeldred@mchsi.com](mailto:debeldred@mchsi.com)

**Central Area**

**Sandy Bennett**

312 N. 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Marshalltown, IA 50158-5616  
Bus.: (641) 754-6120  
Home: (641) 752-0816  
E-mail: [sb-slp@mchsi.com](mailto:sb-slp@mchsi.com)  
[sbennett@marshmed.com](mailto:sbennett@marshmed.com)

**East Central**

**Sally Briggs**

2651 Glen Hollow Court  
Coralville, IA 52241  
Cell: (319) 321-6765  
E-mail: [msbriggs3@gmail.com](mailto:msbriggs3@gmail.com)

**East Area**

**Nancy Shannon**

27210 Cadda Road  
Long Grove, IA 52756  
Home: 563-285-8185  
Fax: (563) 285-9604  
Cell: (563) 340-7350  
E-mail: [nsshannon@aol.com](mailto:nsshannon@aol.com)

**Southwest**

**Martin Wright**

55491 230<sup>th</sup> Street  
Glenwood, IA 51534  
Home: (712) 527-3681

E-mail: Martin: [spolyiasw@msn.com](mailto:spolyiasw@msn.com)

**Will Shafer (Ass't Dir.)**

P.O. Box 210  
204 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St.  
Panama, IA 51562  
(712) 489-2470

Will: [panama@iowatecel.com.net](mailto:panama@iowatecel.com.net)

**South Central**

**Colleen Gangestad**

1403 Clayton Road  
Creston, IA 50801  
Home: (641) 782-6060  
E-mail: [cgangestad@iowatelecom.net](mailto:cgangestad@iowatelecom.net)

**Southeast**

**Brad Bengé**

3219 Ave. J  
Fort Madison, IA 52627  
Home: (319) 372-9177  
Cell: (319) 371-6441  
Fax: (319) 372-1935  
E-mail: [bjbenge@msn.com](mailto:bjbenge@msn.com)

Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”

### **Section III:** **Special Olympics and Special Olympics Iowa Volunteer Information**

#### **Roles for the Special Olympics Volunteer**

Special Olympics Iowa is a sports organization and therefore, there are many opportunities and roles for a Special Olympics volunteer. For example, employees of a company can come as a team of volunteers to an area or state-level competition, fundraise or coach for a local program (delegation) or serve in any number of other volunteer roles at the local, area or state level. There are volunteer roles to fit any interest and any availability.

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.”

Individuals interested in volunteering beyond their current level of involvement may contact SOIA at 515-986-5520, ask for the Director of Field Services.

#### **Potential Special Olympics Volunteer Roles**



**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

## **Volunteer Screening and Requirements**

Special Olympics Iowa (SOIA) truly appreciates the thousands of volunteers who share their time and talents with Special Olympics athletes throughout the year. SOIA is committed to protecting the athletes, volunteers and staff involved with the program. Therefore, SOIA developed a mandatory Volunteer Registration and Screening Policy for all Class A and Class B volunteers effective July 1, 2005.

All volunteers must fully complete and sign a volunteer application. Failure to do so may result in rejection of the application or termination of any involvement with the program.

### **Class A Volunteers**

- Volunteers who have regular, close physical contact with athletes
- Volunteers in a position of authority or supervision with athletes
- Volunteers in a position of trust of athletes
- Volunteers who handle substantial amounts of cash or other assets of SOIA

### **Class B Volunteers**

- Volunteers who only have limited contact with athletes or who have contact with athletes accompanied by coaches and chaperones

## **Volunteer Screening Process**

### **Class A Volunteers (Adult)**

- Completion of a volunteer registration form, screen using a national vendor (with re-screening every three years), and photo ID check or identity verification at events

### **Class A Volunteers (Minor)**

- Completion of a volunteer registration form, two personal/professional references (one of whom is from the volunteer applicant’s school, church, civic group, etc.), photo ID check at the time of registration and photo ID check or identification verification check at events

**Complete the Special Olympics Iowa “Class A” Volunteer Form:  
Find the link to download at: <http://www.soiowa.org/Pages/InformationApplications.aspx>**

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

**Protective Behavior Training**

The Special Olympics U.S. Risk Management and Insurance Task Force have created new online Protective Behaviors training material. The new training material is a critical tool for protecting Special Olympics athletes from sexual, physical and emotional abuse.

Each U.S. Program must incorporate the new Protective Behaviors training into its regular ongoing training for all Class A volunteers and staff members. Effective October 1, 2007 the new online version of the Protective Behaviors training will replace all previous Protective Behaviors materials.

**All existing Class A volunteers (coaches, chaperones, volunteers who are one-on-one with Special Olympics athletes) must complete the online training by 12/31/07. The training must then be completed at least once every three years.**

**New Class A volunteer applicants must complete the online training before they can become a Class A volunteer. The training must then be completed at least once every three years.**

The following are directions for completing the online training:

- 1.) Go to [www.soiowa.org](http://www.soiowa.org).
- 2.) Move your cursor over “Volunteer.”
- 3.) Click on “Volunteer Information & Applications.”
- 4.) The training material will be found on that Web page.

After completing the online training, volunteers will be asked to complete a 10 question test and submit their name and contact information.

Volunteers who do not have access to the Internet may request a CD or written version of the Protective Behavior Training. They will then complete a hard copy of the 10 question test and submit that test to the state office.

Please contact Erin Hall to receive the CD or written version of the online training, the hard copy test or additional information regarding the Protective Behavior Training:

Cathy Richey  
Special Olympics Iowa  
551 SE Dovetail Road, PO Box 620  
Grimes, IA 50111  
Telephone: 515-986-5520  
Fax: 515-986-5530  
E-Mail: [crichey@soiowa.org](mailto:crichey@soiowa.org)

## **Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

### **Language Guidelines**

Why is language and specific terminology important? Special Olympics prefers to focus on people and their gifts and accomplishments, and to dispel negative attitudes and stereotypes. In an ideal world, labels would not exist, but unfortunately they do and language choices can have a powerful impact on impressions and attitudes. As language has evolved, Special Olympics has updated its official terminology to use more widely accepted terminology that is more acceptable to our athletes.

### **Appropriate Terminology**

- Special Olympics uses the term “intellectual disabilities”. Other terms are used around the world.
- Refer to participants in Special Olympics as “Special Olympics athletes” rather than “Special Olympians” or “Special Olympic athletes”.
- Use “people-first language”. Refer to individuals, persons or people with intellectual disabilities, rather than “intellectually disabled people” or “the intellectually disabled”.
- People have intellectual disabilities, rather than are “suffering from,” “afflicted with” or “a victim of” intellectual disabilities.
- Distinguish between adults and children with intellectual disabilities. Use adults or children, or older or younger athletes.
- A person “uses” a wheelchair, rather than is “confined” or “restricted to” a wheelchair.
- “Down syndrome” has replaced “Down’s Syndrome” and “mongoloid.”
- Refer to participants in Special Olympics as athletes. In no case should the word athletes appear in quotation marks.
- A person is physically challenged or disabled rather than crippled.
- Use the words “Special Olympics” when referring to the worldwide Special Olympics movement.

### **Terminology to Avoid**

- Do not use the label “kids” when referring to Special Olympics athletes. Adult athletes are an integral part of the Special Olympics movement.
- Do not preface Special Olympics with the word “the”. This implies that Special Olympics is a one-time, singular event rather than a year-round, ongoing program of sports training and competition.
- Do not use the adjective “unfortunate” when talking about people with intellectual disabilities. Disabling conditions do not have to be life-defining in a negative way.
- Do not sensationalize the accomplishments of persons with disabilities. While these accomplishments should be recognized and applauded, people in the disability rights movement have tried to make the public aware of the negative impact of referring to the achievements of people with physical or intellectual disabilities with excessive hyperbole.
- Use the word “Special” with extreme care when talking about persons with intellectual disabilities. The term, if used excessively in reference to Special Olympics athletes and activities, can become a cliché.

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

**Section IV:  
Coaches’ Training**

**Head Coach**

1. Is responsible for completing all forms completely and following the proper procedures, rules and regulations established by Special Olympics Iowa.
2. Is responsible to review all letters of verification, (Delegation Reports) from State Office, to make sure that all forms and entries sent to State Office have been received and are correct.
3. Selects one coach or chaperone for every three athletes. These persons should be of the appropriate sex.
4. Oversees other coaches and chaperones from the same team.
5. Is responsible for reproducing coach’s packets and other materials/information for chaperones and assistant coaches.
6. Complete each year the Local Program Accreditation Report send to the State Office. Each time you add a new name to your roster let the State Office know this change, along with the appropriate forms.
7. Organize and conduct a training program which:
  - a. Develops the necessary physical, mental, and social skills for Special Olympics competition.
  - b. Ensures each participant a positive experience geared to enrich personal growth.
8. Provide as many opportunities for competition as possible.
9. Complete all forms and meet all deadlines assigned by Area Directors and Special Olympics Iowa for registering athletes.
  - a. Medical-parental release forms (you keep one copy and send one to the State Office).
  - b. Area Entry Forms
  - c. State Entry Forms
  - d. Volunteer Application
10. Encourage parents/guardians to participate in Local, Area and State development of Special Olympics and to attend Special Olympics events.
11. Complete event evaluations and recommendations for rule revisions.
12. Keep accurate records on all athletes and activities.
13. Follow Special Olympics Iowa guidelines when conducting fundraising activities, and report all income and expenditures in conducting such activities to the State Office.
14. Must be present with teams at competition.
15. Select responsible and qualified assistant coaches and chaperones. Make sure all coaches and chaperones have completed Class A Volunteer registration with the State Office. All coaches and chaperones must wear their credentials at all events.
16. Anyone who coaches Special Olympics athletes is expected to attend Area and State Coaches meetings and Training Clinics.
17. All Coaches must sign and return the Coaches Code of Conduct Policy.

**Guidelines for Parents Attending Competitions**

<b>Protest Form</b>	Only Head Coach or Certified coach can sign.
<b>Chaperone/Athlete Ratio</b>	Special Olympics recommends one Coach/Chaperone per 3 athletes. Of course we realize there are some situations that require a one-to-one ratio, which we are open to discuss.
<b>Head Coach</b>	Person responsible for paperwork and coordination of team and other coaches and chaperones.
<b>Chaperone</b>	Under the Head Coach, a team member with duties and responsibilities.
<b>Parent/Spectator</b>	Official role is to be a spectator.

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

**How to become a Special Olympics Iowa Volunteer Coach**

- 1) Complete the Special Olympics Iowa “Class A” Volunteer Form
  - a) Form available to download at: <http://www.soiowa.org/Pages/InformationApplications.aspx>
- 2) Complete the Protective Behaviors Training
  - a) Available at: <http://www.specialolympics.org/protectivebehaviors>
- 3) Review, sign and return the Coaches’ Code of Conduct to the Director of Training
  - a) Available in the Coaches’ Handbook or from the state office.
- 4) Review (online), or attend the General Orientation, take the General Orientation quiz and return to the Director of Training at the State Office.
- 5) Attend a sport specific training clinic
  - a) Training Schools are offered in all sports throughout the year, in many locations across the state of Iowa
  - b) A current listing of training schools can be found at: <http://www.soiowa.org/Pages/TrainingSchools.aspx>
  - c) Coaches and Potential Coaches can attend any training school in any sport in any area
- 6) Complete the sport specific quiz, found at: <http://www.soiowa.org/Pages/CoachingInformationApplications.aspx>
- 7) Complete the required 10-hour practicum working with Special Olympics athletes in the sport you are certifying
- 8) Complete an Application for Sport Certification (obtained at the training school or by contacting the Director of Training)
- 9) Recertify every 4 years, the recertification process is as follows:
  - a) Complete continuing education relevant to your role as a SOIA volunteer coach (i.e., becoming certified/recertifying in CPR/First Aid, classes/seminars on Intellectual Disabilities/Autism, etc, taking advanced SO training courses) OR by retaking the same sport training school
  - b) Retake the sport specific quiz
  - c) Complete the required 10-hour practicum working with Special Olympics athletes in the sport you are recertifying
  - d) Complete an Application for Sport Certification (obtained by contacting the Director of Training)
- 10) Additional and advanced training will be offered in each sport area as well as other areas including but not limited to, Coaching Special Olympics Athletes, Train-the-Trainer, Games Management, etc.

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

## **Special Olympics Iowa Coach Training**

Special Olympics Iowa has a long history of offering training for our coaches. Since 2003, as mandated by SOI, Special Olympics Iowa has offered an accredited Coach Education Program.

The Special Olympics Iowa Coach Education Program is based upon the system used by Special Olympics, Inc. to certify coaches worldwide. Coaches attending training schools learn new and adaptable skills from professionals and then share these skills with their Special Olympics athletes. Upon completing the 10-hour minimum practicum with Special Olympics athletes, those who have attended the training schools will be eligible to become certified coaches through Special Olympics Iowa and Special Olympics, Inc.

One result of the Coach Education Program has been the improvement in the quality of both Area and State competitions. Coaches have a better idea of what to expect when attending competitions and athletes have received improved training. With a 10-hour minimum coaches practicum experience with Special Olympics athletes, all those completing a training school will be eligible to become certified coaches through Special Olympics Iowa and Special Olympics Incorporated.

All training schools will be listed in the newsletter, on our Web page, [www.soiowa.org](http://www.soiowa.org), and will be emailed to coaches on our email database. You can register online for these training schools. Move your cursor over coach, and you will see a dropdown box, click on information for potential and current coaches, and you will see the online registration there. Please remember you are required to register for training schools you plan on attending.

If a coach has not been certified within the proposed time frame his/her team would not be able to compete at the district or state level.

## **Section V:** **Intellectual Disability\***

### **What is the definition of intellectual disability?**

According to the World Health Organization:

- Intellectual disability is a condition of arrested or incomplete development of the mind characterized by impairment of skills and overall intelligence in areas such as cognition, language, and motor and social abilities.
- Intellectual disability can occur with or without any physical or mental disorders.
- Although reduced level of intellectual functioning is the characteristic feature of this disorder, the diagnosis is made only if it is associated with a diminished ability to adapt to the daily demands of the normal social environment.

### **How prevalent are intellectual disabilities?**

Intellectual disability knows no boundaries. It cuts across the lines of racial, ethnic, educational, social and economic backgrounds, and it can occur in any family. The following statistics and information on intellectual disabilities have been adapted from information from the Population Reference Bureau, The ARC ,the World Health Organization and various associations for people with disabilities.

According to the World Health Organization, approximately 170 million people or three percent of the world’s population have intellectual disabilities – the largest disability population in the world. Prevalence by continent:

Africa	20,310,000	Australia	525,000
Asia	97,710,000	Europe	15,390,000
Latin America	13,800,000	North America	8,610,000

*\* In response to a call from our athletes and the growing social unacceptability of the term “mental retardation” around the world, Special Olympics has adopted the term “intellectual disabilities” when referring to the people with whom we serve. The word “mental” can be confused with the term “mental illness” and the word “retardation” is associated with offensive terms such as “retard” or “retarded.”*

## Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”

### Facts about Intellectual Disabilities

#### Incidence

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

#### Prevalence

- 15 times more prevalent than deafness
- 15 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 (87%)*

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

##### *Severe (13%)*

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

#### Causes of Intellectual Disability:

- 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

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

**Section VI:**  
**Information on Athletes and Athlete Participation**

**Athlete Membership**

Any individual with an intellectual disability who meets the eligibility requirements may become an athlete member of Special Olympics by submitting or having a coach submit on his/her behalf a correct and complete Application for Participation and Official Special Olympics Release Forms prior to training or competing in Special Olympics. These forms can be obtained from the state office or on our web site, [www.soiowa.org](http://www.soiowa.org). Look under Games and Competition, then Entry Forms.

**Statement of Eligibility of Special Olympics**

**General Statement of Eligibility:** To be eligible to participate in Special Olympics, athletes must be at least 8 years old and identified by an agency or professional as having one of the following conditions: intellectual disability; a cognitive delay as determined by standardized measures such as intelligence quotient or other generally accepted measures; or a closely related development disability, i.e., functional limitations in both general learning and adaptive skills.

**Age Requirements:** There is no maximum age limitation for participation in Special Olympics. The minimum age requirement for participation in Special Olympics competition is 8 years of age. For children with intellectual disabilities ages 2 through 7, Young Athletes strengthens physical development and self-esteem by building skills for future sports participation and socialization.

**Degree of Disability:** Participation in Special Olympics training and competition is open to all persons with intellectual disabilities who meet the age requirement, regardless of the level or degree of that person’s disability, and whether or not that person also has other mental or physical disabilities, so long as that person registers to participate in Special Olympics as required by the General Rules.

**Identifying Persons with Intellectual Disabilities:** In the context of Special Olympics, the term “intellectual disabilities” is a synonym for mental retardation. Therefore, Special Olympics uses the definition of intellectual disabilities/mental retardation provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) the United Nation’s specialized agency for health. According to the WHO, intellectual disability is a condition of arrested or incomplete development of the mind characterized by impairment of skills and overall intelligence in areas such as cognition, language, and motor and social abilities. Intellectual disability can occur with or without any physical or mental disorders. Although reduced level of intellectual function is the characteristic feature of this disorder, the diagnosis is made only if it is associated with a diminished ability to adapt to the daily demands of the normal social environment.

- a. The person has been identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability as determined by their localities; or
- b. The person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures such as intelligent quotient or “IQ” testing or other measures that are generally accepted within the professional community in that Accredited Program’s nation as being a reliable measurement of the existence of a cognitive delay; or
- c. The person has a closely related developmental disability. A “closely related developmental disability” means having functional limitations in both general learning (such as IQ) and in adaptive skills (such as in recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care). However, persons whose functional limitations are based solely on a physical, behavioral, or emotional disability, or a specific learning or sensory disability, are not eligible to participate in Special Olympics athletes, but may be eligible to volunteer for Special Olympics.

**Registration of Athletes:** Registration as a Special Olympics athlete shall include the submission of the following forms, which can be obtained from the state office or on our Web site. Go to [www.soiowa.org](http://www.soiowa.org) then look under Games & Competition, Entry Forms

- a. Athlete Medical Form (SOIA physical form)
- b. Athlete Release Form (SOIA release form)

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

**Participating by Individuals With Down Syndrome Who Have Atlanto-axial Instability**

In light of medical research indicating that up to 15% of individuals with Down syndrome have a mal-alignment of the cervical vertebrae C-1 and C-2 in the neck known as Atlanto-axial instability, exposing them to possible injury if they participate in activities that hyper-extend or hyper-flex the neck or upper spine, every Accredited Programs must take the following precautions before permitting athletes with Down syndrome to participate in certain physical activities:

- 1) Athletes with Down syndrome may participate in most Special Olympics sports training and competition, but shall not be permitted to participate in any activities which, by their nature, result in hyper-extension, radical flexion or direct pressure on the neck or upper spine, unless the requirements of subsections (g)(2) and (g)(3) below are satisfied. Such nonpermitted sports training and competition activities include: butterfly stroke and diving starts in swimming, diving, pentathlon, high jump, squat lifts, equestrian sports, artistic gymnastics, football (soccer), alpine skiing, snowboarding, and any warm-up exercise placing undue stress on the head and neck.
- 2) An athlete with Down syndrome may be permitted to participate in all the activities described in subsection (1) above if that athlete is examined (including x-ray views of full extension and flexion of neck) by a physician who has been briefed on the nature of the Atlanto-axial instability condition, and who determines, based on the results of the examination, that the athlete does not have an Atlanto-axial instability condition.
- 3) An athlete with Down syndrome who has been diagnosed by a physician as having an Atlanto-axial instability condition may nevertheless be permitted to participate in the activities described in subsection (1) above if the athlete, or the parent or guardian of a minor athlete, confirms in writing his or her decision to proceed with these activities notwithstanding the risks created by the Atlanto-axial instability, and two (2) 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 judgment, preclude the athlete from participating in Special Olympics restricted activities. These statements and certifications shall be documented and provided to Accredited Programs using the standardized form approved by SOI, entitled “Special Release for Athletes with Atlanto-axial Instability,” and any revisions of that form, approved by SOI.

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

## **Section VII:** **Sports and Competition**

### **Sports Training and Competition**

#### **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. There may be fees associated with training and competition, but those fees should be covered through fundraising by the local program (delegation).

#### **Special Olympics Games and Competitions**

In keeping with the traditional meaning of the Olympics, Special Olympics believes that every Special Olympics Games and Competition should be a complete experience for the athletes, and to do so must embody the following four characteristics at a minimum:

- 1) The spirit of sportsmanship and love of participation for their own sake. These are reflected in the Special Olympics Oath which can be recited by the athletes before all Special Olympics Games: “Let Me Win, But If I Cannot Win, Let Me Be Brave In the Attempt.”
- 2) The sense of pageantry and ritual which can lend significance to the simplest sports event. Every Games should include colorful opening ceremonies, dignified award presentations to all participants, and a closing ceremony in which the athletes are made to feel that whether they won or lost, they have brought credit to themselves, their families, and their communities.
- 3) Competitions, clinics, or demonstrations of activities in the arts, such as dancing, rhythmic, music and painting.
- 4) Social activities, such as dances, informal games, or sing-alongs. Whenever possible, Games should be scheduled for two days to enable the athletes to stay overnight.

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

## **Official and Recognized Sports of Special Olympics**

**Official Summer Sports** (*Sports in bold are offered by SOIA*)

<b>Aquatics</b>	<b>Equestrian Sports</b>	<b>Roller Skating</b>
<b>Athletics</b>	<b>Football (Soccer)</b>	<b>Softball</b>
Badminton	<b>Golf</b>	Table Tennis
<b>Basketball</b>	<b>Gymnastics</b>	Team Handball
<b>Bocce</b>	Judo	<b>Tennis</b>
<b>Bowling</b>	<b>Power lifting</b>	<b>Volleyball</b>
<b>Cycling</b>	Sailing	<b>Flag Football</b>

**Official Winter Sports** (*Sports in bold are offered by SOIA*)

<b>Alpine Skiing</b>	Floor Hockey	<b>Speed Skating</b>
<b>Cross Country Skiing</b>	Snowboarding	
<b>Figure Skating</b>	<b>Snowshoeing</b>	

**Recognized Sports** (*Sports in bold are offered by SOIA*)

<b>Cheerleading</b>	Netball
Cricket	
Kayaking	

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

Special Olympics aim is 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 intellectual disabilities and disabilities requiring the greatest assistance and support.

In team sports, lower-ability athletes who are not yet ready for playing on teams can participate in individual skills contests. For example, in basketball, athletes can earn medals for performing the skills of dribbling, shooting, and passing. 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 (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 Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

**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, SOIA conducts seven State Games a year.

**The SOIA State Games include:**

<b>Winter Games</b>	Alpine Skiing, Figure Skating, Nordic Skiing, Snowshoeing and Speed Skating
<b>Mid-Winter Games</b>	Basketball (Skills and Team), Cheerleading, Gymnastics and Power lifting
<b>Summer Games</b>	Aquatics, Athletics, Bocce, Cycling, Roller Skating, Soccer (Skills and Team), and Tennis (Developmental)
<b>Individual State Games</b>	Bowling, Equestrian, Softball, Flag Football and Volleyball

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 training and competition.

**Rules for Official Sports**

SOI has the ultimate authority to determine what rules will govern the conduct of training and competition in a particular Official Sport. All such rules shall be published in the SOI Sports Rules and disseminated to all Accredited Programs. You can also go online to secure this information at [www.Specialolympics.com](http://www.Specialolympics.com). then click on coach, click on sports rules, click on Winter or Summer Games, Click on specific sport you need.

**Rules of Sports Federations**

Accredited Programs and Games Organizing Committees (GOC’s) shall follow the rules for specific sports which are issued from time to time by the International Sports Federations, as provided in Section 2.12

**Levels of Competition**

In Special Olympics Iowa there are many levels of competition from the local to the International. There are three levels of “state” competition in Iowa: local, area and state. **Local** competition involves events held at schools, facilities, institutions, etc. **Area** competition involves events held in 1 of the 11 designated areas in Iowa. **State** competition involves the winners of the area competitions advancing to the next higher level. All competitions must be sanctioned by Special Olympics Iowa.

Areas will hold competition in Soccer, Bowling, Basketball, Track & Field, and Swimming. The dates for the area events will be published by the specific area newsletters and will appear in the monthly coaches’ newsletter. First place winners of the area events will advance to state competition. **It is the coach’s responsibility to send all entries for state competition to the state office before the deadline date.**

**World or National**, competition involves the winners of the state competition being selected by a random draw and meeting the criteria set forth by Special Olympics North America and/or Special Olympics, Inc.

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

**Criteria for Athletes to Compete**

**Area:**

To compete in an Area meet or event, the participant must:

- Have a correct and complete Application for Participation in Special Olympics and Official Special Olympics Release form on file with the State Office as submitted by his/her coach before any training or practice is initiated.
- Have participated in training sessions no less than an eight-week period of time.
- Have all entry forms and requirements correctly completed by his/her coach and submitted by deadline dates established in their area.
- Areas will hold competition in Soccer, Bowling, Aquatics, Athletics, and Basketball.

**State:**

To compete on the State Level depends on the sport and event.

**Plan A – Bocce, Cheerleading, Cycling, Flag Football, Golf, Gymnastics, Roller Skating, Powerlifting, Soccer, Softball, Tennis, Volleyball and Winter Sports.**

- Have a correct and complete Application for Participation in Special Olympics and Official Special Olympics Release form on file with the State Office as submitted by his/her coach before any training or practice is initiated.
- Have participated in training sessions no less than an eight-week period of time.
- Have all entry forms and requirements correctly completed by his/her coach and submitted by deadline dates established by State Office.

**Plan B - To be eligible to advance to state level competition in the sports of Aquatics, Athletics, Basketball, Bowling, and Soccer Skills an athlete must:**

- Have participated in eight-week training program for a minimum.
- Placed first at the area competition in the sports that he or she wished to advance in (e.g., an athlete placed 1<sup>st</sup> in the 50m dash at the area games and will move on to compete in the 50m dash at the State Games Competition.).
- Have all entry requirements correctly completed by his/her coach and submitted before deadline to State Office.

**World/National/International:**

- Athletes will be chosen for higher-level competition by a random draw selection from among 1<sup>st</sup> place winners from all divisions of state level competition (e.g., an athlete who placed 1<sup>st</sup> at the State Games in a year preceding the National or International Games) is eligible to apply for the International Games.
- Be 12 years of age.
- Possess the skills to be able to function as part of a team (e.g., cooperation, sharing, group living, following directions, basic social skills, etc.).
- Be available and commit to an intensive training program prior to the National or International Games. (The parents or guardian must be willing to transport and make transportation arrangements for these training sessions.)

**Honest Effort/20% Rule**

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. An athlete that completes an event at a score 20% better than the preliminary or seed score shall be subject to disqualification.

Coaches are responsible for assuming that the reported assessments and preliminary or qualifying scores for their athletes accurately reflect the ability of their athletes. Coaches should submit their athletes best available performance time/measurement, whether it is from a preliminary event or practice.

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

**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.

\*\*\*\*For a more specific and complete understanding of divisioning in Special Olympics Iowa,  
please refer to the Special Olympics Iowa Coaches’ Handbook\*\*\*\*

**Use of the Metric System**

All Special Olympics competitions shall be conducted using the Metric measurement system. However, since most of the existing pools in Iowa are not metric pools, swimming events will be conducted in yards.

**Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

## **Section VIII:** **Opportunities for Involvement by Athletes and Potential Athletes of ALL Abilities**

### **Special Olympics Unified Sports®**

This Special Olympics program represents the first organized effort in history to combine individuals with intellectual disabilities and those without as participants on the same sports team. Unified Sports® is an important program because it expands sports opportunities for athletes seeking new challenges and dramatically increases integration in the community. Unified Sports® develops sports skills through quality training and competition, the new program fosters group participation and spirit, cooperation, socialization, and a sense of belonging. Current program offerings include bowling, basketball, volleyball, cycling, roller skating, tennis, golf, and track and field.

#### **Unified Sports® is a unique and important program because it:**

- Integrates athletes with and without intellectual disability in a setting where all athletes are challenged to improve their skills.
- Provides a valuable sport opportunity to individuals with intellectual disability who are not presently involved with Special Olympics, especially those with mild retardation and those in communities where there are not enough Special Olympics athletes to conduct team sports.
- Prepares athletes with higher level skills for participation in school or community sports.
- Increased public awareness of the spirit and skills of individuals with intellectual disability.
- Enables the families of Special Olympics athletes to participate as team members or coaches on Unified Sports® teams.
- Enables athletes to develop friendships and an understanding of each others capabilities through a spirit of equality and team unity.

#### **How it Works**

A Special Olympics Unified Sports® program can be conducted in a variety of settings, such as:

- A program organized by a Special Olympics group.
- A community or church group.
- An adult recreation league (Parks and Recreation).
- An interscholastic or intramural school league.
- A league sponsored by business or civic groups.
- A program organized by college/university students.

Special Olympics Iowa wants to encourage and support Iowa in the development of new Unified Sports® Programs. Grants are available to help facilities with the starting of these programs.

Athletes with intellectual disability who participate in Unified Sports® may or may not be involved in the local Special Olympics programs. Athletes without intellectual disabilities can be recruited from schools, corporations, civic groups, or other community organizations.

#### **Unified Sports® Teams may enter SOIA State Tournaments**

Unified Sports® Teams may compete in regular Special Olympics team sport events. You will need to make sure you check Unified Team on the entry form, and you will be placed in divisions only with unified teams.

Unified Teams will be accepted in the following sports; basketball, bowling, soccer, softball, tennis and volleyball.

## Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”

### Healthy Athletes®

The mission of Special Olympics Healthy Athletes®, developed in 1996, is to improve athletes’ ability to train and compete in Special Olympics. Healthy Athletes® is designed to help Special Olympics athletes improve their health and fitness, leading to enhanced sports experience and improved well-being.

During a Healthy Athletes® event, Special Olympics athletes receive a variety of health screenings and services in a series of clinics conducted in a welcoming, fun environment. Health care professionals and students are trained to provide the screenings in an effort to educate the professional community about the health needs and abilities of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The Healthy Athletes® initiatives include:

**Fit Feet** – Many Special Olympics athletes suffer from foot and ankle pain or deformities that impair their performance. Also, athletes are not always fitted with the best shoes and socks for their particular sport. During Special Olympics competitions, athletes receive foot and ankle screening for deformities, and are checked for proper shoes and socks.

**FUN Fitness** – FUN Fitness is the comprehensive physical therapy component of the Special Olympics Healthy Athletes initiative. FUN Fitness is designed to assess and improve flexibility, functional strength and balance; to educate participants, families and coaches about the importance of flexibility, strength and balance; and to provide hands-on opportunity for participants to learn about physical therapy.

**Health Promotion** – Venues empower and motivate athletes to make healthy lifestyles choices that will improve their long-term health by using interactive educational games and literature. Athletes are offered guides for healthy eating, lifestyle choices, fun ways to increase physical fitness as well as information on topics such as tobacco avoidance, sun safety and skin care.

**Healthy Hearing** – The purpose of Healthy Hearing is to screen the hearing of athletes and notify athletes and their coaches if follow-up care is needed, provide corrective (hearing aids) and preventative (custom swim earplugs) services where possible, and study the prevalence of hearing loss in athletes competing in Special Olympics events.

**Opening Eyes** – Objectives of Opening Eyes includes providing screenings to Special Olympics athletes and educating athletes, parents and coaches about the importance of regular eye care.

**Special Smiles** – The mission of Special Smiles is to increase access to dental care for Special Olympics athletes, as well as all people with intellectual disabilities. Dental screenings are used as a means to increase awareness of the condition of the athletes’ oral health for the athletes themselves, as well as their parents and/or caregivers. The athletes are provided with hygiene education to help ensure they are doing an adequate job of brushing and flossing, as well as nutritional education to understand how their diet affects their total health. The athletes are also provided with a list of dentists/clinics in their area who will treat patients with special needs.

**MedFest** – MedFest is a screening program that facilitates the required standard sports physical examination for current and prospective Special Olympics athletes. The Special Olympics General Rules requires that all athletes who want to participate in Special Olympics must be examined by a physician or trained medical professional who completes the “medical certification” section of the Athlete Registration Form. The physical examinations at MedFest are conducted by volunteer medical professionals and are free to current and prospective athletes.

## **Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”**

### **Global Messenger Training and Athlete Leadership Workshops**

Special Olympics offers athletes a program that goes beyond competition and training. It is called Athlete Leadership Programs (ALPs). Special Olympics offers two phases of this program – Global Messenger Training and Athlete Leadership Workshops. The Global Messenger Training is a two-day workshop in which athletes learn how to write speeches as well as learn techniques on delivering a speech. Each athlete has a speech coach and together they work at putting the athletes’ thoughts and experiences about Special Olympics on paper. Athletes in this program gain confidence, grow in self-esteem, and gain valuable everyday skills beneficial to life outside of Special Olympics. The Athlete Leadership Workshops help teach leadership skills so they can become leaders in the Special Olympics movement. Through instruction, athletes practice in forming and articulating opinions, group discussion and techniques for gathering input. Equally important is the enhancement of awareness and listening skills of volunteers, staff and family members as they interact with athletes as peers during this training.

### **Young Athletes**

The Young Athletes program addresses the needs of children ages 4-7. Current eligibility guidelines for Special Olympics include the criterion that a child be eight years of age or older in order to participate. Increasingly, however, there is the recognition of the importance of beginning physical and social activities for children at younger ages and further, that Special Olympics can and should play a role in the development of these activities. Special Olympics Iowa will offer two opportunities for the Young Athletes: Play Activities Day and Sports Training.

Play Activities Day takes place at the local level. Activities include games that focus on running, jumping, striking, kicking and throwing. The day serves two purposes; to teach in order to help the child develop better skills and to have fun by having the chance to feel success and a sense of achievement. This is not a day of competition. It is a play day. At the end of the day, each child will receive a participation ribbon. **Special Olympics Medical and Release Forms are required for this event. There is free equipment available to anyone interested in the Play Day Program along with a CD on how you can apply play activities at home or school.**

### **Motors Activities Training Program**

The Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) provides comprehensive motor activity and recreation training for people with severe intellectual disability or multiple disabilities, with emphasis on training and participation rather than competition. MATP is part of the commitment by Special Olympics to offer sports training opportunities to individuals with intellectual disability of all ability levels.

### **Challenge Days: “Believe and Achieve”**

Since this program started, it has been a goal of Special Olympics Iowa to continually expand it. Challenge Days consist of various activities in which participants may take part as a team or individually in sports such as wheelchair basketball, volleyball, ball darts, dice bowling, ramp bowling and many other activities, all with the aid of switch activated equipment. Staff and volunteers have almost as much fun as the athletes!

**Challenge Day schedules and locations vary from year to year.**

For more information on Unified Sports, Healthy Athletes, Global Messenger Training, Athlete Leadership Workshop, Play Activity Days, Motor Skills Activities Training Program or Challenge days, please contact: Kathy Irving, Director of Special Programs at 515-686-5520 or [kirving@soiwoa.org](mailto:kirving@soiwoa.org)

Special Olympics Athlete Oath: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt”

***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!

***Be sure to take the General Orientation Quiz, and return to Rhonda Schwarzkopf to fulfill your General Orientation requirement in becoming a Special Olympics Certified Coach!***