



General Orientation

Special Olympics Iowa
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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 state office to fulfill your General Orientation requirement in becoming a Special Olympics Certified Coach!

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 30 Olympic-type sports. There is no charge to participate in Special Olympics.

Worldwide, Special Olympics serves more than 4.5 million persons with intellectual disabilities in more than 200 programs in 170 countries. When communities interact with these athletes, stereotypes of people with intellectual disabilities give way to acceptance and positive attitudes. Changing attitudes toward people with intellectual disabilities is top priority for Special Olympics.

Overview of Special Olympics and Special Olympics Iowa

MISSION STATEMENT

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 disability, 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.

GOAL OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS

The ultimate goal of Special Olympics is to help persons with intellectual disabilities participate as productive and respected members of society at large, by offering them a fair opportunity to develop and demonstrate their skills and talents through sports training and competition, and by increasing the public's awareness of their capabilities and needs. The Founding Principles support this goal by emphasizing that people with intellectual disabilities can enjoy, learn and benefit from participation in individual and team sports, underpinned by consistent training and by competition opportunities for all levels of ability. According to the Principles, Special Olympics must transcend all boundaries of race, gender, religion, national origin, geography, and political philosophy. They also state that every person with an intellectual disability should have the opportunity to participate and be challenged to achieve their full potential, with the focus at community level, to reach the greatest number of athletes, strengthen their families and create an environment of equality, respect and acceptance.

SPREAD THE WORD TO END THE WORD

“Spread the Word to End the Word” is a campaign created by youth, in an ongoing effort with Special Olympics and Best Buddies International, to engage schools, organizations and communities by raising the consciousness of society about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the word “retarded” and encouraging everyone to stop using the R-word.

The day is devoted to educating and raising awareness of the positive impact individuals with intellectual disabilities have in our communities and why the use of the R-word is hurtful, even in casual conversation. The day has become an annually recognized event (in March) to raise awareness and ultimately encourage acceptance and respect for people with intellectual disabilities in everyday lives.

To get involved or find out more information on Spread the Word to End the Word, visit www.r-word.org.

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 disability 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.

Special Olympics Iowa History

The Special Olympics Iowa State Office is located in Grimes and operates with 19 full-time staff members and is governed by a 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.

Approximately 13,000 Special Olympics athletes participate in year-round local, area and state events. Special Olympics Iowa offers Alpine skiing, aquatics, athletics, basketball, bocce, bowling, cheerleading, cross country skiing, cycling, equestrian, figure skating, flag football, golf, gymnastics, power lifting, roller skating, snow shoeing, soccer, softball, speed skating, tennis and volleyball.

Our special programs include: Unified Sports®, Challenge Days, Young Athletes, Global Messengers, and Healthy Athletes.

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 Accredited 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.

LANGUAGE GUIDELINES

Words matter. Words can open doors to cultivate the understanding and respect that enable people with disabilities to lead fuller, more independent lives. Words can also create barriers or stereotypes that are not only demeaning to people with disabilities, but also rob them of their individuality. The following language guidelines have been developed by experts for use by anyone writing or speaking about people with intellectual disabilities to ensure that all people are portrayed with individuality and dignity.

Appropriate Terminology

- Refer to participants in Special Olympics as Special Olympics athletes rather than Special Olympians or Special Olympic athletes
- Refer to individuals, persons or people with intellectual disabilities, rather than intellectually disabled people or the intellectually disabled
- A person has intellectual disabilities, rather than is suffering from, is afflicted with or is a victim of mental retardation/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
- When writing, refer to persons with a disability in the same style as persons without a disability: full name on first reference and last name on subsequent references
- Do not refer to an individual with intellectual disabilities as "Bill" rather use the journalistically correct "Bill Smith" or "Smith"
- A person has a physical disability rather than crippled
- Use the words "Special Olympics" when referring to the worldwide Special Olympics movement

Terminology to Avoid

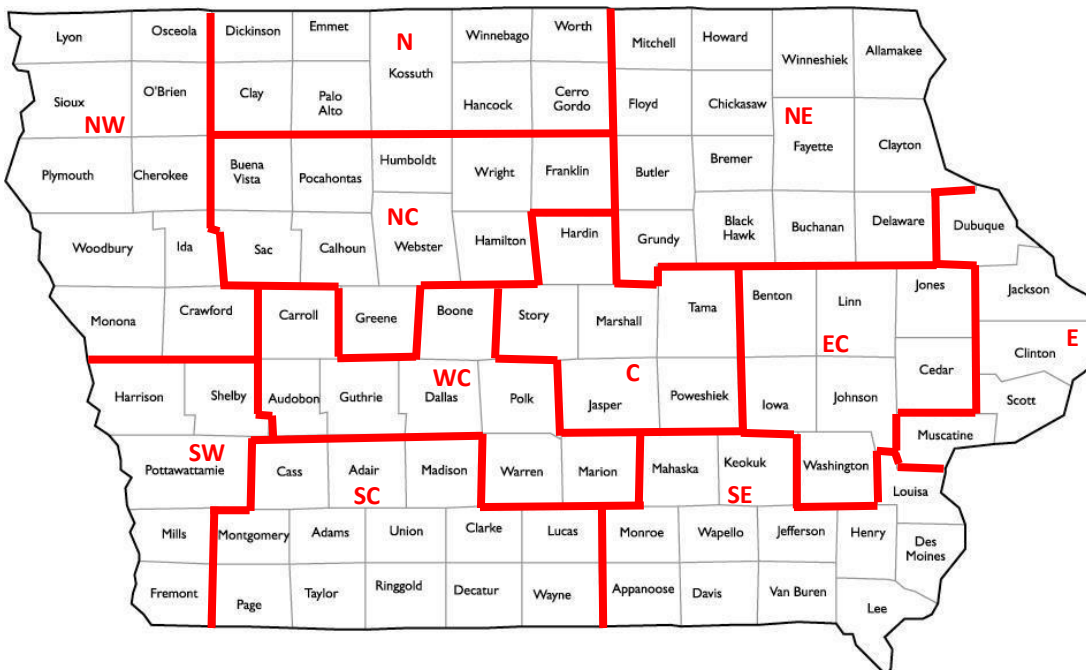
- Do not use the label "kids" when referring to Special Olympics athletes. Adult athletes are an integral part of the movement
- Do not use the word "the" in front of Special Olympics unless describing a specific Special Olympics event or official
- Do not use the adjective "unfortunate" when talking about persons with an intellectual disability. 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 references to Special Olympics athletes and activities, can become a cliché.

Special Olympics Iowa Area Map

Adams SC
 Adair SC
 Allamakee SE
 Appanoose SE
 Audubon WC
 Benton EC
 Black Hawk NE
 Boone WC
 Bremer NE
 Buchanan NE
 Buena Vista NC
 Butler NE
 Calhoun NC
 Carroll WC
 Cass SC
 Cedar EC
 Cerro Gordo N
 Cherokee NW
 Chickasaw NE
 Clarke: SC
 Clay N
 Clayton NE
 Clinton E
 Crawford NW
 Dallas WC
 Davis SE
 Decatur S C
 Delaware NE
 Des Moines, SE
 Dickinson N
 Dubuque. E
 Emmett E
 Fayette NE

Floyd NE
 Franklin NC
 Freemont SW
 Greene NC
 Grundy NE
 Guthrie WC
 Hamilton NC
 Hancock N
 Harrison SW
 Hardin C
 Henry SE
 Howard NE
 Humboldt NC
 Ida NW
 Iowa EC
 Jackson E
 Jasper C
 Jefferson SE
 Johnson EC
 Jones EC
 Keokuk SE
 Kossuth N
 Lee SE
 Linn EC
 Louisa SE
 Lucas SE
 Lyon NW
 Madison SC
 Mahaska SE
 Marion WC
 Marshall C
 Mills SW
 Mitchell NE

Monroe SE
 Monona NW
 Montgomery SC
 Muscatine E
 O'Brien NW
 Osceola NW
 Page S C
 Palo Alto N
 Plymouth NW
 Pocahontas NC
 Polk WC
 Pottawattamie SW
 Poweshiek C
 Ringgold SC
 Sac NC
 Scott E
 Shelby SW
 Sioux NW
 Story C
 Tama C
 Taylor SC
 Union SC
 VanBuren SE
 Wapello SE
 Warren WC
 Washington EC
 Wayne SE
 Webster NC
 Winnebago N
 Winneskiek NE
 Woodbury NW
 Worth N
 Wright NC



Director of Regional Field Services – each region includes the following areas:

- North Region – Central, North, North Central, Northeast
- Southeast Region – East, East Central, Southeast
- West Region – Northwest, South Central, Southwest, West Central

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.

Central Area

Jennifer Hart

10 West State Street
Marshalltown, Iowa 50158
Bus: (641) 754-5715
Home: (641) 752-9518
Cell: (641) 512-4993
Fax: (641) 754-5728
E-mail: jhart@ci.marshalltown.ia.us

East Area

Nancy Shannon

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Long Grove, IA 52756
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East Central Area

Katie Shelor

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South Central Area

Dawn Criss

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Leon, IA 50144
641-442-5874
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North Area

Norm Johnson

YMCA of the Okoboji's
1900 41st St.
Spirit Lake, IA 51360
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E-mail: norm.johnson@okobojimca.com

North Central

Co-Director: Liz Rusher

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Bus: (515) 574-5623
Fax: (515) 576-8774
E-mail: erusher@fort-dodge.k12.ia.us

Co-Director: Lee Decicco

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Fort Dodge, Iowa 50501
Bus: (515) 574-5811
E-mail: ldecicco@mediacombb.net

Northeast Area

Joe and Eileen Wilson

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Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613
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eileen.wilson@juno.com

Northwest Area

Peg Koele

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pkoele@rvcsd.org
soregisternw@gmail.com (entries)

Southeast Area

Brad & Julie Bengé

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Fort Madison, IA 52627
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Julie Cell: (319) 371-6443
Home: (319) 372-9177
Email: bjbenge@msn.com
brad.benge@fmcscd.org

Southwest

Martin Wright

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E-mail: spolyiasw@msn.com

Assistant Director: Will Schafer

PO Box 210 / 204 N 3rd St.
Panama, IA 51562
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Bus: (712) 743-2425
Fax: (712) 743-1213
Email: panama@iowatelecom.net

West Central Area

Debby Eldred

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E-mail: debeldred@mchsi.com
registerwestcentral@gmail.com (entries)

Special Olympics and Special Olympics Iowa Volunteer Information

Roles for the Special Olympics Volunteer

Special Olympics Iowa is a sports organization that offers 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.

VOLUNTEER SCREENING AND REQUIREMENTS

SOIA 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. SOIA has a mandatory Volunteer Registration and Screening Policy for all Class A volunteers. Failure to complete the requirements 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

Examples: Coaches, chaperones, Athlete Leadership Program mentors, family members who drive/chaperone non-related athletes, Unified partners, LETR members and steering committee members.

To become a Class A Volunteer

- Complete a [Class A Volunteer Application](#). This allows SOIA to run a background check using a national vendor
- Complete the Protective Behavior Training and quiz [online](#) or request a printed copy from the State Office. At the end of the online quiz, you will be asked to submit your contact information. Both you and SOIA will receive a confirmation email. Do not delete this email in case you need to provide proof of completion. If you requested a printed copy of the quiz, return it to the State Office by mail or email to classa@soiowa.org
- Submit a color photo, passport quality. The easiest way to submit a photo is to email a .jpg file to classa@soiowa.org. Please make sure it is not blurry or black and white and is appropriate for all to see. Your driver’s license photo is not allowed to be used as your colored photo. If you would prefer, you may mail a photo to the SOIA State Office. Your photo will be returned with your credential

- Read the Coach/Chaperone Code of Conduct (found in **Section 9 – GENERAL FORMS—Found at www.soiowa.org**) and check the box on the Class A Volunteer Application form

*The first three requirements listed above must be completed and submitted before a background check may be processed. To ensure that a credential is issued by a certain date, please complete the requirements at least 30 days in advance. Incomplete applications will be held at the State Office for only three (3) months. After that, the application will be shredded and a new application will need to be submitted.

Class A credential expiration date begins when the background check is complete, not when it is submitted.

Class A Volunteer Application is required to be renewed every 3 years.

CLASS A VOLUNTEER APPLICATION – (See **Section 9 – GENERAL FORMS**)

PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOR TRAINING SLIDES AND QUIZ – (See **Section 9 – GENERAL FORMS**)

COACH/CHAPERONE CODE OF CONDUCT – (See **Section 9 – GENERAL FORMS**)

COACH/CHAPERONE CODE OF CONDUCT INCIDENT REPORT FORM – (See **Section 9– GENERAL FORMS**) **DISCIPLINARY STEPS FOR VIOLATING COACH/CHAPERONE CODE OF CONDUCT**

The following progressive disciplinary steps may be taken with the delegation at whichever step is deemed appropriate under the circumstances by the Area Director and staff of Special Olympics Iowa.

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Step 1 | Verbal warning to the coach/chaperone with a written copy of the Incident Form to the Area Director and State Office. |
| Step 2 | A written Incident Report must be completed giving warning to the coach/chaperone with a copy to the Area Director and State Office. |
| Step 3 | The State Office and Area Director will conduct a personal meeting with the coach / chaperone to review unacceptable behavior and to agree on a plan for improvement.

The meeting will be documented in writing and copies distributed to the coach/chaperone, Area Director and State Office. |
| Step 4 | Suspension from coaching/chaperoning for a specific time period. |

The State Office and Area Director will discuss the circumstances and must approve/disapprove the action. The action will be documented in writing and presented to the coach/chaperone and a copy will be sent to the local delegation.

Any further action must be approved by the Area Director and State Office. Further action could be, but is not limited to:

- Suspension for a longer period
- Permanent expulsion

APPEAL PROCESS

The coach/chaperone has the right to appeal any disciplinary action to the State Office. The coach/chaperone must submit a written notice of appeal, with a copy to the Area Director and the Program Vice President of SOIA. This notice must include a request for a meeting within 30 days of being notified of the disciplinary action.

The appeal will be heard by a designated advisory committee. A decision must be rendered in writing within 21 days following the meeting and may reverse, amend or affirm the disciplinary action. The decision shall be submitted to the athlete and to their local program and should include, if applicable, a plan of action for the athlete to correct the unacceptable behavior that led to the disciplinary action.

COACH EDUCATION PROGRAM

Special Olympics Incorporated (SOI) mandates that all Special Olympics Coaches must be certified in any sport for which they are a head coach. The SOIA Coach Education Program will help coaches fulfill the needed requirements.

The goal of the SOIA Coach Education Program is to give all athletes the benefit of quality coaching. Results of the program are an improvement in competitions, better awareness of rules and better training.

Athletes are asked to practice at least eight weeks or ten hours prior to a competition. During this time, athletes will learn and understand the specific sport rules, develop the skills needed for the sport and become physically and mentally prepared for practice and competition.

Coaches' trainings are offered throughout the year at locations across the state as well as online. All coaches' trainings will be listed in the newsletter, on the [SOIA website](#) and via emails sent to Delegation Managers.

Pre-registration is required for local trainings so SOIA will have the proper equipment and paperwork available. Trainings will be rescheduled if necessary due to bad weather or low registration. For more information regarding [Special Olympics sports, rules, and coaching guidebooks](#), please visit the Special Olympics, Inc. website at www.specialolympics.org.

Online training opportunities are also available on the [Coaches Training](#) page of the SOIA website. These are provided through the American Sport Education Program (ASEP) and the National Federation of State High Schools (NFSHS). Trainings are sport-specific but are *not* Special Olympicsspecific. Some fees are associated with online courses. You may apply to have up to half the cost of your on-line coaches trainings paid for by a SOIA scholarship. Visit the [Participation Forms](#) page to download the scholarship application or *See Section 9 - GENERAL FORMS*.

Please contact the State Office at 515-986-5520 or go to the SOIA website with any questions or comments regarding SOIA coaches training.

Requirements are listed below for Class A Volunteers who serves in the following capacities:

ASSISTANT COACH OR CHAPERONE:

The following must be completed *before* contact is made with SOIA athletes.

- [Class A Volunteer Application](#)
- [Protective Behaviors Training](#)
- [General Orientation and Quiz](#)
- Concussion Training from one of the following:
[Heads-Up Concussion in Youth Sports](#)
[Concussion in Sports](#)

An Assistant Coach is not a “certified” or “head” coach and is unable to file a protest.

The following requirements are for certification in each sport a coach trains athletes:

HEAD COACH:

A Head Coach is SOI Certified and is able to file a protest. Coaches have three (3) years to become a Head Coach in each sport in which they train athletes.

- Complete all the Assistant Coach requirements listed previously
- Attend sport-specific training in each sport offered by your delegation, in person or online
- Complete and submit to the State Office an [Application for Sport Certification](#) for each training session attended
- Complete the ten (10) question review given following the training session and receive a score of 80% or better
- Complete the coach development course training sessions of “The Principles of Coaching” and “Coaching Special Olympics Athletes” in person or online

ADVANCED COACH:

An Advanced Coach has obtained certification in their sport from a recognized state or national governing body.

- SOIA may ask Advanced Level coaches to be clinicians at training schools
- Duties may include assisting new SOIA coaches and delegations, assisting with coaches’ trainings and informing local schools and agencies about Special Olympics

COACH RECERTIFICATION:

Coach certification renews every three years.

- Continuing education:
Recertification can be accomplished by completing any of the following:
 - Attend a sport-specific certification course
 - Complete an online American Sport Education Program (ASEP) course or National Federation of State High Schools (NFSHS) course. Links to specific sports training are found on the [Coaching Clinics and Courses page](#) of our website
 - Complete a continuing education course associated with working with persons with intellectual disabilities including courses on Autism, learning and behavior disorders, Down syndrome

- First Aid
- CPR
- Concussion training
- Other courses that would be beneficial to a SOIA coach o Complete and submit to the State Office an [Application for Sport Certification](#) in each sport for which re-certification is being requested

ESTABLISHING A SPECIAL OLYMPICS IOWA DELEGATION

When establishing a Special Olympics Iowa delegation, the following steps should be taken:

1. Contact the State Office at (515) 986-5520 to get in touch with your Regional Field Director who can assist in this process.
2. Complete and/or submit the following paperwork to your Regional Field Director as soon as possible (the majority of forms can be found on the [Participation Forms page](#) of the SOIA website or in **Section 9 – GENERAL FORMS**:
 - a. [Delegation Manager Form](#) – Form can also be found in **Section 9 – GENERAL FORMS**.
 - b. [Coaching Requirements](#) – The Delegation Manager and all coaches/chaperones are required to fulfill the coaching responsibilities. All documents and further information can be found in **Section 9 – GENERAL FORMS**.
 - i. [Class A Volunteer Application](#) – Found in **Section 9 – GENERAL FORMS**
 - ii. Coach / Chaperone Code of Conduct – Form found in **Section 9 – GENERAL**

FORMS

iii. [Protective Behaviors Training and Quiz](#) – More information in **Section 3 – VOLUNTEER INFORMATION or slides and quiz may be found in Section 9 – GENERAL FORM**

iv. [General Orientation and Quiz](#) – Found on the SOIA website

- c. **Centralized Accounting** – For tax reporting purposes, all money raised in the name of Special Olympics Iowa must be filtered through the SOIA State Office. Please contact the State Office to establish an account.
- d. **Special Olympics Sports Certification** – Required within three years of coaching in each sport – upcoming trainings can be found in the newsletter or you can find online courses [on our website](#).
3. Complete athlete paperwork and training requirements:
 - a. [Athlete Application for Participation](#) – Form can also be found in **Section 9 – GENERAL FORMS**. All SOIA athletes are **required** to complete and submit this form to the State Office prior to training and competing. The form must be renewed every three (3) years. Keep copies of your athletes' applications and have available at all practices and events in case of an emergency.
 - b. [Athlete Code of Conduct](#) – The form can be found in **Section 9 – GENERAL FORMS**. All athletes should sign for accountability purposes. Keep this form for your own records.

- c. **Training** – Athletes must begin training at least eight weeks or ten hours prior to any competition.
 - d. **Unified Partners** – Unified partners are individuals without intellectual disabilities who practice and compete alongside Special Olympics athletes in team sports. Unified Partners are ***required*** to receive Class A status prior to contact with Special Olympics athletes. The [Class A Application](#) can be found in **Section 9 – GENERAL FORMS**. You can find more information about the Unified Sports program in **Section 6 – SPECIAL PROGRAMS**
4. To register for events and competitions:
- a. [Schedule of Events](#) – You can find a current schedule of all events on our website [schedule of events](#).
 - b. [Area Competitions](#) – Qualifying competitions are held at the Area level. Entry forms are found on the [Area pages](#) on the SOIA website. Area entry forms are due to the Area Director prior to deadlines.
 - c. [State Competitions](#) – Competition registration materials provide additional details regarding State Competitions, entry forms, and deadlines. You can find these on the SOIA website under [State Competitions](#). All entry forms are due to the State Office prior to deadlines.
 - d. [Special Programs](#) – Special Programs include Athlete Leadership Programs (ALP's), Challenge Days, Healthy Athletes, Project UNIFY, Unified Sports and Young Athlete's Play Day. ***See Section 6 – SPECIAL PROGRAMS*** for additional information.
 - e. [Fundraising Events](#) – SOIA conducts many fundraising events throughout the year in order to provide opportunities for our athletes.
5. Maintain regular communication with the State Office:
- a. [Newsletter](#) – You will be added to this email list after submitting your Delegation Manager Form. Please review information to stay current.
 - b. [Annual Coaches Meetings](#) – Coaches meetings are held annually in the fall within each Area. Meeting dates will be posted on the [schedule of events](#) and in the newsletter. *Please attend for important updates, event dates, and deadlines.*

DELEGATION MANAGER FORM – (*See Section 9 – GENERAL FORMS*)

Each delegation of SOIA will designate a Delegation Manager. The primary role of the Delegation Manager is to serve as a liaison between the delegation, Area Director and State Office. Responsibilities of the Delegation Manager include providing ongoing communication with the Area Director, State Office, delegation volunteers including coaches, athletes and athlete families and/or staff, submitting registration forms including entry forms to the Area Director and State Office and distributing Class A credentials to delegation members.

- This form only needs to be filled out once or whenever there are any changes
- Submit additions or changes to classa@soiowa.org

COMPETITION AND TRAINING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

This committee consists of key volunteers who are located throughout the state and serve as a valuable and necessary link between the SOIA volunteers and the SOIA staff. This committee will advise staff in the areas of training, competition, and overall customer service concerns. A list of current committee members can be found on the “Contact Us” page of the SOIA [website](#).

CONCUSSION AWARENESS AND SAFETY RECOGNITION

The Special Olympics U.S. Risk Management & Insurance Task Force (RMITF) with input from the Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) has created the following concussion awareness and safety recognition policy that was implemented by all U.S. Programs effective January 1, 2015. The attached policy represents minimum requirements all U.S. Programs must follow. In addition, Iowa law requires that additional safety measures be enacted in order to properly manage the health, safety and welfare of all participants in the state of Iowa. Those measures are described in the following documentation.

The two key governing bodies regarding athlete safety MAC and the RMTF have discussed the need for a concussion management policy to ensure the health and safety of all Special Olympics participants on both national and state levels. Additionally, insurance requirements and state law have driven many sports organizations to implement concussion management policies.

If you have any additional questions concerning this policy please feel free to contact Jina Doyle (jdoyle@amerspec.com) or Jocelyn Starzak (jstarzak@specialolympics.org) to discuss the situation further. The primary focus of this policy is the well-being of Special Olympics participants, and all decisions should be made in the best interest of the participants. **“When in doubt, sit them out!”**

As noted, please feel free to contact either of the two individuals listed above and/or the State Office if you have questions that are specific to the actual policy.

OBJECTIVE

It is Special Olympics’ intent to take steps to help ensure the health and safety of all Special Olympics participants. All Special Olympics participants should remember that safety comes first and should take reasonable steps to help minimize the risks for concussion or other serious brain injuries.

DEFINING A CONCUSSION

A concussion is defined by the Centers for Disease Control as a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head as well as serial, cumulative hits to the head. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth—causing the brain to bounce around or twist within the skull. Although concussions are usually not lifethreatening, their effects can be serious and therefore proper attention must be paid to individuals suspected of sustaining a concussion. Subsequently, the State of Iowa defines this as the terms approved in Senate File 367, Iowa Code 280.13, affected in the Eighty-fourth General Assembly.

SUSPECTED OR CONFIRMED CONCUSSION

Effective January 1, 2015, a participant who is suspected of sustaining a concussion in a practice, game or competition shall be removed from practice, play or competition at that time. Removal from activity may be due to the observance of/from/by a coach, a contest official, or a qualified medical professional. If a qualified medical professional is available on-site to render an evaluation, that person shall have final authority as to the removal or return to play of the participant. If applicable, the participant’s parent or guardian should be made aware that the participant is suspected of sustaining a concussion.

RETURN TO PLAY

A participant who has been removed from practice, play or competition due to a suspected concussion may not participate in Special Olympics sports activities until either of the following occurs (1) at least seven (7) consecutive days have passed since the participant was removed from play and a currently licensed, qualified medical professional provides written clearance for the participant to return to practice, play and competition or (2) a currently licensed, qualified medical professional determines that the participant did not suffer a concussion and provides written clearance for the participant to return to practice play immediately. Written clearance in either of the scenarios above shall become a **permanent record**. (See attached, approved return to participation protocol following a concussion guidelines for licensed health care providers).

REQUIRED TRAINING AND TIMELINE

All coaches are required to complete concussion awareness training, which is available at www.cdc.gov/concussion and submit the certificate of completion to their state Program. Any concussion awareness training other than the CDC's Heads Up training must be approved by SOI. For coaches registering for the first time on or after January 1, 2015, confirmation of such training must be provided to the U.S. Program prior to the individual beginning volunteer duties. For Coaches registered prior to December 31, 2014, confirmation of such training must be provided to the U.S. Program no later than December 31, 2015.

U.S. Programs must implement a system for tracking completion of the concussion awareness training by coaches. Verification of completion of training must be emailed to the attention of the State Office no later than 45 days prior to the three year anniversary date of training in order to maintain certification status.

FREQUENCY OF TRAINING

Concussion awareness training must be completed by all Coaches at least once every three years.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

U.S. Programs are required to communicate in writing to all participants and/or parents/guardians, the concussion awareness and safety recognition program, as outlined in the Suspected or Confirmed Concussion and Return to Play sections of this policy.

The Centers for Disease Control website www.cdc.gov/concussion provides additional resources relative to concussions that may be of interest to participants and their families.

FIRST AID / EMERGENCY MEDICAL PLAN

ACCIDENT / INCIDENT FORM – *(See Section 9 – General Forms)*

DEVELOPING YOUR EMERGENCY MEDICAL PLAN

Planning and preparation are the keys to appropriate handling of athletic injuries. Regardless of the seriousness of an injury, failure to properly prepare for every foreseeable occurrence is inexcusable. In the case of a severe injury, careful preparation and an effective emergency plan can have a major effect on the outcome. **All incidents should be reported to SOIA within 24 hours using the Special Olympics Accident / Incident Report Form found in *Section 9 – GENERAL FORMS*.**

FIRST AID KIT

The initial focus of your preparation is equipment and supplies required for treating injuries. Never begin a practice or event without a properly stocked first aid kit that is immediately accessible. All first aid kits should be updated/checked/re-stocked prior to any practice, event or travel situation.

Minimum components are:

- Plastic adhesive strips (various sizes) and adhesive tape
- Gauze pads (sterile and non-sterile) and rolled gauze
- Triangle bandages and elastic wraps
- Squirt-top container of sterile water and cotton swabs
- Antibacterial cream, petroleum jelly and sun block cream
- Scissors and sharp knife
- Phone numbers for emergency services
- Emergency information card for each athlete
- Medical gloves

Other essential items to have at the activity are:

- Adequate supply of ice in a well-insulated container
- Water reserved for emergency care
- Towels, blankets and splints

ACCESS TO EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS)

The term “Access EMS” is used frequently in medical circles. This simply means that the highest level of pre-hospital care available in your area should be summoned as quickly as possible.

There are several principles that will aid in the rapid responses of EMS;

- Know whom to call before the need arises. The type of service available varies in different locales. It is important that you have knowledge of the services in your area. To locate this service, contact the hospital(s) in your area (or in the area where the event or practice is held) and ask what emergency services are available. If you wait until service is needed, valuable time will be wasted
- Record the phone numbers of local EMS services and have them available at all times. An index card will be useful when sending the assigned person to make the call for emergency help, and should be kept in the first aid kit. In addition, including this number in one’s cell phone contact list is strongly advised. This is even more important when 911 is not available
- Know the location of the nearest operational phone at all times during practice and games. Cell phones should be carried at all times in case of emergency. Establish a procedure for obtaining this information when traveling to an “away” event or practice site
- Know where you are by street name at all practices and games. This is especially true when you are in unfamiliar territory. It is much better to give too many directions than too few
- Know the easiest entrance to the field or building. Be sure that the access gate(s) or door(s) is unlocked, or that you have all necessary keys
- Assign a person to meet and direct the emergency units to the scene. That person must remain at designated “entrance” until all EMS units have arrived
- Ensure that you are prepared and available to give a complete report to arriving EMS personnel. Have the athletes’ medical information in hand and remain with the athlete until questions are answered
- Ensure that you have all athletes’ insurance coverage information available. This will save valuable time

- and avoid possible delays in treatment due to concern about payment of medical expense
- Keep parents, spectators and others calm and well informed. It is often better to keep families away from the injured athlete, but not at risk of a confrontation. Keep them fully advised at what is happening and allow them to accompany the athlete if ambulance transport is required (assuming the ambulance company/EMT's will allow it)
- Remain calm and cooperative. Stress that everyone involved in the care of an injured athlete must work together

DOCUMENTED PLAN

It is essential that your plan for handling medical emergencies be set forth in writing and distributed to all staff members. Anyone who may be called upon to assist in an emergency situation must receive, and be completely familiar with the plan.

Include specific indications of policies and procedures to be followed. Key concerns are: ☐

Notification of parents

- Notification of administration
- Selection of transport method
- Designation of hospital
- Accompanying athlete to treatment
- Supervision of remaining athletes
- Preparation of injury report

If an athlete is injured during practice or a competition, delegations are to work with medical personnel to determine when the athlete can return to training and activities.

COACHES' RESPONSIBILITIES AT COMPETITIONS, GAMES & TOURNAMENTS

- Coaches are responsible for athletes throughout SOIA competitions and events, including travel to and from the events and any overnight stays. It is up to the coach to ensure that the athletes' physical and emotional needs are met during this time
- Ensure that athletes are properly warmed-up prior to competition and cool down after • Take precautions to avoid sunburn and heat exhaustion by using sunscreen, drinking plenty of water and taking advantage of shaded areas whenever possible. Verify that athletes are not allergic to sunscreen prior to application
- Be sure needed first aid is administered promptly. Bring a first aid kit if possible • Be sure athletes get adequate rest. Security has the authority to remove individuals from the dormitories, hotels or venue sites if behavior cannot be controlled
- Be sure athletes eat properly; avoid overeating or missing meals
- NOTE: If an athlete requires a special diet, it is the responsibility of each coach to provide for the athlete's needs
- Be aware that the excitement of the games may encourage inappropriate behaviors. Close supervision while in the dormitories and at all activities is required
- The coach should be aware of athlete's possessions
- The coach is expected to be totally familiar with the medical conditions, precautions, and medication requirements of the athlete. It is the coaches' responsibility to insure that medication is administered properly and appropriately. Knowledge of the medication regimen (what, how much, and when) is essential

- The coach is expected to carry a copy of the valid Application for Participation for each athlete at all times
- The coach must be totally familiar with all schedules; sports, special events, and meals. It is the coaches' responsibility to ensure the athlete is on time for all sports competition and also has the opportunity to participate in special activities
- The coach is expected to be familiar with Special Olympics sports rules. Questions or concerns about sports events should be addressed to the program Vice President
- Protest Procedure – Only a Certified Coach may file a protest to the appropriate venue official within 30 minutes of the event
- ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES AND SMOKING ARE **NOT** ALLOWED AT SPECIAL OLYMPICS
- EVENTS

Please do not hesitate to ask questions prior to or during the competition. The more you know, the less confusion will be experienced.

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.

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.

All training schools will be listed in the newsletter, on our Web page, www.soiowa.org, and will be emailed to coaches on our email database. You can register online for these training schools. 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.

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.”*

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
- 36 times more prevalent than total blindness
- 30 times more prevalent than neural tube defects such as spina bifida

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
- Often need skills broken down into smaller tasks and need concepts made very concrete

Severe (13%)

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

Causes of Intellectual Disability:

- Over 350 known causes
- In $\frac{3}{4}$ of the cases the specific cause is unknown
- 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

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. Look under Games and Competition, then Entry Forms.

ATHLETE ELIGIBILITY FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Under the “Eligibility” section of the Official Special Olympics Sport Rules, it states that people are eligible for Special Olympics provided they meet the following criteria:

- People age eight and above who are considered to have intellectual disability* as determined by their localities
- People with closely related developmental disabilities** such as those who have functional limitations, both in general learning and in adaptive skills, such as recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care

Note: People with functional limitations based solely on a physical, behavioral, emotional, specific learning disability, or sensory disability are not eligible.

*Any person eight (8) years of age or older who is identified as having intellectual disability by an agency or a professional in any given local area is considered eligible for Special Olympics. Other terms that may be used synonymously with intellectual disability include: cognitive disabilities, mental handicaps, or mentally challenged.

**When the term “intellectual disability” or other similar description is not used to identify the person in a local area, eligibility should be determined by whether or not the person has functional limitations in both general learning and adaptive skills. “Developmental disability” is the term most often used to describe persons with both limitations. Other terms that may be used synonymously with developmental disabilities are developmental handicap, developmentally delayed, or severe disabilities.

General learning limitations refer to substantial deficits in conceptual, practical and social intelligence that will result in performance problems in academic learning and/or general life functions. Learning limitations may be assessed by standardized tests or through criterion-referenced measures (such as teacher/parent observations or actual performance samples).

Adaptive skills limitations refers to on-going performance deficits in skill areas considered essential to successful life functioning. These adaptive skills areas include: communication, self-care, home-living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, recreation/leisure, and work. Adaptive skills limitations may be measured by standardized tests (such as adaptive behavior scales or checklists) or through criterion-referenced measures (such as teacher/parent observations or actual performance samples).

If a person is identified as having a developmental disability with functional limitations in both general learning and adaptive skills, it must still be determined by an agency or professional whether or not the functional

limitations are solely due to intellectual disability or a closely related developmental disability. If the functional limitations are solely due to physical disabilities, emotional disturbance, behavior disorders, specific learning disabilities, visual impairments, or sensory disabilities, this person is not eligible for Special Olympics.

REGISTRATION OF ATHLETES

An individual with an intellectual disability who meets the eligibility requirements may register as a SOIA athlete by submitting an Application for Participation in Special Olympics. Click [here](#) or go to **Section 9 – GENERAL FORMS**. All athletes must have a completed application submitted to the State Office prior to training and competition.

PARTICIPATION OF ATHLETES WITH CRIMINAL RECORDS OR A HISTORY OF VIOLENT OR ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR

SOIA is an athlete-centered movement that welcomes athletes of all abilities with intellectual disability to participate in sports training and competition. SOIA is inclusive for all persons with intellectual disability over the age of eight.

The health and safety of all SOIA participants is of paramount importance. Participants should feel that every SOIA event is a safe and positive experience and should not be fearful of other athletes, coaches and volunteers.

Because of SOIA's inclusive philosophy, the issue of how to treat athletes who have been convicted of violent crimes or who engage in violent, abusive or disruptive behavior is particularly sensitive.

SOIA has established a policy regarding athletes with criminal records which reflect violence, use of illegal substances, (or other non-approved behaviors) or with a history of violent, abusive, or disruptive behavior. Please contact the State Office for a copy of this policy. The criteria established by SOIA must be applied and/or reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Any Special Olympics Athlete whose name appears on the Sex Offender Registry is barred from participation or attendance at any SOIA sponsored event. If your delegation has athletes who fall under such criteria, you must prohibit them from participation in any practices and/or Special Olympics sanctioned events or opportunities.

All Application for Participation forms will trigger a background check on the name of the submitting individual to make certain they do not appear on this list.

ATLANTOAXIAL INSTABILITY

Atlantoaxial instability can be defined as an abnormal increase of mobility of the two upper cervical vertebrae (C-1 and C-2) located at the top of the neck (Cooke, 1974). The stability of the atlantoaxial joint is determined by the integrity of the cranovertebrae ligaments and other factors (Aung, 1973). A displacement of the C-1 vertebrae in relation to the C-2 vertebrae results in atlantoaxial dislocation (Shriver, 1983). According to Aung (1973), this dislocation, which only rarely affects individuals with Down syndrome, "...occurs spontaneously or can be induced by minor injury." (p.197) The results of this dislocation is generally an excessive anterior movement of the upper spine and has quite serious implications (Giblin & Micheli, 1979).

SOI has an outstanding safety record and was the first organization serving disabled populations to react to the concerns of the medical community. As best as can be determined, no individual with Down syndrome participation in the Special Olympics program has been injured due to atlantoaxial instability (Cooke, 1984; Shriver, 1983). In March, 1983, Special Olympics outlined the following procedures in response to the situation.

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

Restrictions of individuals with Down syndrome to participate in certain activities apply:

1. National and U.S. Programs may allow all individuals with Down syndrome to continue in most Special Olympics sports training and competition activities. However, such individuals shall be temporarily restricted from participating in sports training and competition activities which, by nature, result in hyper-extension, radical flexion, or direct pressure on the neck or upper spine, unless the requirements below are satisfied. Such sports training and competition activities include: butterfly stroke and diving starts in swimming, diving, pentathlon, high jump, equestrian sports, artistic gymnastics, football (soccer), alpine skiing, and any warm-up exercise placing undue stress on the head and neck;
2. Restriction from participation in the above-listed activities continue until an individual with Down syndrome has been examined (including x-ray views of full extension and flexion of the neck) by a physician who has been briefed on the nature of the atlantoaxial instability condition, and the results of such an examination demonstrate that the individual does not have the atlantoaxial instability condition;
OR
3. For any individual diagnosed as having the atlantoaxial instability condition, the examining physician shall notify the athlete's parents or guardians of the nature and extent of the individual's condition, and such athlete shall be allowed to participate in the activities listed above only if the athlete submits written certifications from two physicians, on forms prescribed by SOI, combined with an acknowledgement of risks signed by the adult athlete or his or her parents or guardian if the athlete is a minor.

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 stresses the competition approach to sports, not a recreational approach.

To do so, Special Olympics Games and Competition 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.

DELEGATION MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES AT COMPETITIONS, GAMES & TOURNAMENTS

- Serve as a liaison between the delegation, Area Director and State Office
- Provide ongoing communication with the Area Director, State Office, delegation volunteers including coaches, athletes and athlete families and/or staff
- Complete and submit all forms in full (Application for Participation, Delegation Manager Form, registration materials, etc.)
- Ensure proper supervision of all athletes at all events (1:3 ratio / one Class A volunteer for every three athletes)
- Ensure all competition materials are distributed throughout the delegation as needed (coaches, volunteers and family members)
- Inform the Area Director or State Office of any scratches
- Submit Class A Volunteer applications 30 days prior to an event to the State Office and distribute credentials to volunteers when received
- Keep accurate records of Application for Participation
- Ensure SOIA guidelines regarding fundraising and use of Centralized Accounting system

GENERAL PRACTICE AND RULES

- **No late entries will be accepted!** SOIA will not accept late entries or incomplete forms o **At competition events, no additions or corrections can be made. Only scratches will be accepted. Please review your delegation report as soon as possible and contact the Area Director or State Office with corrections**
- Athletes must have a current Application for Participation (athlete physical/release) on file with the State Office
- Athletes are not registered with SOIA until their application is on file with the State Office o **Athletes cannot practice or compete without a valid application**
- Athletes are to practice at least eight weeks or 10 hours prior to a competition. Athletes are to know and understand the specific sport rules, develop the skills needed for the sport(s) they participate in and be physically and mentally prepared for competition
- Athletes may participate in one sport per day
- Athletes may participate in one or two events (if applicable) and a relay
- All required registration materials must be submitted to the appropriate Area Director or State Office prior to the deadline date. Entry/registration materials include the specific competition form, Class A Coach/Volunteer roster, any other miscellaneous forms required by the Area Director, Registration Summary Form, Housing Assignment Form if applicable and any other miscellaneous forms required by the State Office
- Please check with your Regional Director or State Office with any questions regarding upcoming local, area, conference, or state competitions
- Special Olympics sports training and competition may be conducted only by or under the auspices and direct supervision of SOI, an Accredited Program, or a GOC. No Accredited Program may permit or engage any third party to conduct or organize any Games, Tournaments or Special Olympics training event for or on behalf of that Accredited Program
- 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 find coaching resources, competition guides, and sports rules on Special Olympics, Inc.'s website at http://www.specialolympics.org/Sections/Sports-and-Games/Sports_and_Games.aspx
- Rules of Sports Federations - Accredited Programs and 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

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, aquatics (swimming) events will be conducted in yards

LOCAL PARTICIPATION

Events may be held at your local level. These differ by location and area. Please check your [Area Pages](#) for more information regarding additional local events. Information may also be found in the newsletter and on the [schedule of events](#).

AREA COMPETITIONS

Area Competitions and event dates can be found on the [Area Pages](#) of the SOIA website, the [schedule of events](#), and published in newsletters. Entries for Area Competitions should be submitted to the Area Director by the entry due date. Winners of the area events may advance to the state competition. Area entry forms for the competitions listed below are located on the [Participation Forms page](#) of the SOIA website and more information can be found on the [Area Page](#). Dates and locations for these qualifying competitions may be found in the [schedule of events](#).

Athletes must have a current Application for Participation on file with the State Office through the [area competition date](#)

Area Basketball Skills

- Held in January/ February
- State qualifier for the Mid-Winter Tournament

Area Aquatics

- Go to the [Area Pages](#) to verify if your area holds an area aquatics competition
- For Areas that do not hold an aquatics competition, the area entry form is due to the State Office by April 1st, to be entered for Summer Games

Area Spring Games (Athletics)

- Held in March/April
- State qualifier for Summer Games

Area Bowling Tournaments

- Held in September/October
- State qualifier for State Bowling

Area Soccer

- Non-State qualifier for Summer Games
- Go to [Area Pages](#) to verify if your area holds an area soccer competition

Area Roller Skating

- Area competition only
- Go to [Participation Forms](#)

CONFERENCE COMPETITIONS

Conference events are qualifying competitions ran by the State Office and/or key volunteers at locations across the state. All entries for conference events are to be submitted to the State Office. Check the [schedule of events](#) for dates and locations. You will find the registration materials under the [Participation Forms page](#) on the SOIA website for the tournaments listed below.

Athletes must have a current Application for Participation on file with the State Office through the Conference competition date

Conference Basketball

- Held in January / February in several location
- State qualifier for Mid-Winter Tournament

Conference Softball

- Held in Des Moines and Cedar Rapids in July
- State qualifier for State Softball

Conference Softball Skills

- Tournaments held in July
- State qualifier for State Softball

STATE COMPETITIONS

Below is a listing of State Games and Competitions. Please note the approximate month of competition and sports offered during the State Games. You can find more information, tentative schedules, rules and general information on the [Participation Forms page](#) on the SOIA website for the events listed below. Dates and locations for all events may also be found on the SOIA website [schedule of events](#). Entries for all state competitions are due to the State Office prior to the deadline.

Athletes must have a current Application for Participation on file with the State Office through the state competition date

State Winter Games

- Held in Dubuque in January
- Non-State qualifier
- Rules and registration materials are posted on the [Winter Games page](#)
- Sports offered:
 - Alpine Skiing
 - Cross Country Skiing
 - Figure Skating
 - Speed Skating
 - Snowshoeing
- Practice and time trails are held on the first day
- Additional activities include Opening Ceremonies, banquet and pool party

Mid-Winter Tournament

- Held in Iowa City in mid-March
- Rules and registration materials are posted on the [Mid-Winter Tournament page](#)
- Sports offered:
 - Basketball 3 on 3 and 5 on 5 Team (State qualifier)
 - Basketball Skills (State qualifier)
 - Cheerleading (Non-State qualifier)
 - Gymnastics (Non-State qualifier)
 - Powerlifting (Non-State qualifier)
- Additional activities include Opening Ceremonies, banquet and dance on Friday night

State Summer Games

- Held in Ames in May o Rules and registration materials are posted on the [Summer Games page](#)
- Sports offered:
 - Aquatics (State qualifier based on specific area)
 - Athletics (Track and Field) (State qualifier)
 - Bocce (Non-State qualifier)
 - Cycling (Non-State qualifier)
 - Tennis and Tennis Skills (Non-State qualifier)
 - Soccer and Soccer Skills (Non-State qualifier)
- Additional activities include Opening Ceremonies, Healthy Athletes, FIT, Olympic Village and dance

Tentative Schedule of Events:

Thursday Events

Bocce Team
Cycling
Soccer Skills
Soccer Team
Tennis Singles
Tennis Skills
Race Walk

Friday Events

Bocce Singles
Tennis Doubles
Athletics (Track and Field)
Aquatics

Saturday Events

1500M Run
400M Dash
200M Dash
4 x 100 M Relay

State Softball Tournament

- Held in Ankeny in August
- Rules and registration materials are posted on the [Softball page](#)
- State qualifier for Skills and Team
- Sports offered:
 - Softball Skills
 - Softball Team

State Equestrian Competition

- Held in Granger in September
- Rules and registration materials are posted on the [Equestrian page](#)

State Flag Football Competition

- Held in Cedar Rapids in October
- Rules and registration materials are posted on the [Flag Football page](#)

State Volleyball Tournament

- Held in Ames in October
- Rules and registration materials are posted on the [Volleyball page](#)

State Bowling Tournaments

- Held in Cedar Rapids, Des Moines and Sioux City in November
- Rules and registration materials are posted on the [Bowling page](#)
- State qualifier

ADVANCED COMPETITION

- USA Games
- World Games
- SOIA will request or determine the number of athletes participating in a specific sport offered at the advanced competition
- Advanced Competition dates, location and deadlines will be posted in the SOIA
- Newsletter and on the SOIA website o Athletes who receive first place in their division at a state competition held one or two years preceding the advanced competition (In a sport in which SOIA will participate in at the advanced competition) may submit a general application by the deadline date to the State Office
- A random draw of all qualified applications will determine who will participate
- Athletes must have all required registration materials complete by the deadline date to the State Office
- Athletes will attend required training camps for a period of up to one week
- Athletes will attend required meetings and uniform fittings
- Athletes will be housed with Team Iowa members for up to two weeks at USA Games and up to three weeks for World Games
- Athletes will not be allowed to stay with or travel with family members, guardians, local coaches, etc. to or during advanced competition
- Athletes will not have one-on-one supervision
- Athletes must function as part of a team, including group living and follow coaching instructions from unfamiliar coaches

DIVISIONING GUIDELINES

- The primary focus of divisioning is to provide quality, fair competition experiences for the athletes using ability as the primary divisioning factor. Gender & age are secondary factors
- When possible, keep to less than a 20% spread within abilities within a division
- There may be divisions of one or two athletes with extremely high or low scores
- The goal, according to SOI divisioning guidelines is to have 3 – 8 athletes / teams in a division
- Special Olympics divisioning guidelines state that the age groups for divisioning are:
 - 8-11
 - 12-15
 - 16-21
 - 22-29
 - 30-50
 - 51+ (created by SOIA)
- Special Olympics divisioning guidelines allow for the combining of individuals in consecutive age groups and/or gender into the same division if their ability levels are similar enough to provide fair and equitable competition
 - Alpine Skiing
 - Basketball Skills
 - Bowling
 - Cross Country Skiing
 - Cycling
 - Equestrian
 - Golf – Unified
 - Roller Skating
 - Snowshoeing
 - Soccer Skills
 - Softball Skills
 - Speed Skating
 - Tennis and Tennis Skills
- Combination gender or consecutive age groups may occur when very low participation numbers exists in order to provide quality, competitive competition. When possible, sports that are generally not combined are:
 - Athletics
 - Aquatics
 - Gymnastics
 - Figure Skating
- Sport that does not allow, per the rules, for the combining of genders is:
 - Power Lifting

The age groups for team sports and relays differ slightly from individual sports and are as follows:

- Athletic and Aquatic Relays:
 - Junior, 15 and younger
 - Senior, 16 and older
- Roller Skating, Snowshoe and Speed Skating
 - Open
- Basketball Team, Bocce, Cheerleading, Flag Football, Softball Team and Volleyball:
 - Junior, 21 and younger
 - Senior, 22 and older
- Relay Categories
 - Co-ed – two female and two male
 - Female – four female
 - Male – four male, one male and three female, or three male and one female

Opportunities for Involvement by Athletes and Potential Athletes of ALL Abilities

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS (ALP'S)

SOIA offers athletes a program that goes beyond competition and training. It is called Athlete Leadership Programs (ALP's). There is a special Athlete Leadership Code of Conduct form that the athlete and Global Messenger coach will need to fill out to participate. Please note that this athlete code of conduct form is different than the one athlete's sign to participate for competition. *(See Section 9 – General Forms)* or go to [Athlete Leadership Programs](#) on the SOIA website. SOIA offers three phases of this program:

1. The **Global Messenger Workshop** – 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 to put 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.
2. The **Athlete Leadership Workshop** – a two day workshop that helps teach leadership skills so athletes may become leaders in the Special Olympics movement. Through instruction, athletes practice 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.
3. **Athlete Input Council** – a forum for athletes to report to other athletes and program leaders what is happening in their areas, voice their opinions about important issues and gain leadership training and experience. Each Area will have representatives that sit on the Council for a two (2) year term.

CHALLENGE DAYS

[Challenge Days](#) is a one day event that has been designed specifically for the severe and profound population as well as our aging population who are unable to compete in a rigorous program using objective and universal sports rules. Due to the need to offer more activities to these individuals, it has been a goal of SOIA to expand on our motor skills programs. Challenge Day introduces team sports adapter for this specific population. It gives these individuals the opportunity to experience success and joy – just as their peers.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS HEALTHY ATHLETES® PROGRAM

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 wellbeing.

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. Athletes are not always fitted with the proper shoes and socks for their particular sport. Volunteer health care professionals will be screening athletes' feet and ankles for deformities as well as checking for infections, nail care and 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. Each athlete is given specific guidelines to help them strengthen muscles that might be weak and need strengthening to better compete.

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. Free hearing aids and batteries for existing hearing aids are available.

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. Bone density tests are provided for free. Each athlete can have a Got Milk? picture taken.

Medfest

MedFest is a Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® 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 Med-Fest are conducted by volunteer medical professionals and are free to current and prospective athletes.

Opening Eyes

Objectives of Opening Eyes includes providing screenings to Special Olympics athletes and educating athletes, parents and coaches about the important of regular eye care. Athletes needing glasses will receive free eyeglasses and those who do not need glasses receive free sunglasses.

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 state 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.

PROJECT UNIFY

[Special Olympics Project UNIFY](#) is a school-based initiative to create opportunities for social inclusion for all students, both with and without intellectual disabilities. The main goal of Project UNIFY is to create an inclusive community. The students are the driving force in this program - physically, academically and socially.

Project UNIFY's diverse activities can be grouped into three major components: Inclusive Sports (Unified Sport), Youth Leadership & Advocacy, and Whole-School Engagement. More information can be found on the [Project UNIFY](#) page of our website.

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 program fosters group participation and spirit, cooperation, socialization, and a sense of belonging.

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 skill
- Provides a valuable sport opportunity to individuals with intellectual disability who are not presently involved with Special Olympics, especially those in communities where there are not enough Special Olympics athletes to conduct team 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 other's capabilities through a spirit of equality and team unity

UNIFIED SPORTS DAY

[Unified Sports](#) are designed to increase awareness and opportunities for Unified recreation participation. Events are held at high schools, colleges, and universities across the state throughout the year. Athletes participate alongside Unified partners in a number of recreational activities throughout the event. The events are designed to increase socialization and provide a fun day of recreation participation and are not considered a competition. Delegations can register athletes to attend these one-day events, at no cost to the athlete. For an opportunity near you, check our [schedule of events](#). More information can be found on our website at <http://www.soiowa.org/Pages/UnifiedSports.aspx>.

UNIFIED SPORTS □ TEAMS

[Unified Sports](#) teams may compete in Special Olympics Iowa team sporting events. When registering for Unified Sports Teams, please ensure that Unified Team is selected on the entry forms. Teams will be placed in divisions with other Unified teams. Your team roster must consist of equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes and Unified Partners. All Special Olympics athletes must have a current [Application for Participation](#) on file at the SOIA State Office. All Unified partners must have a current [Class A Application](#) on file at the SOIA State Office. Teams should practice for eight to ten weeks prior to their first competition.

SOIA currently offers competitive Unified Sports Teams in athletics relays, aquatics relays, basketball team, bocce, bowling, cheerleading, cycling, figure skating, flag football, golf, ice skating relay, roller skating relay, snowshoeing relay, soccer team, softball team, tennis and volleyball. More information can be found on the [Unified Sports](#) page of our website.

YOUNG ATHLETE'S PLAY DAY

The [Young Athlete's Play Day](#) program is designed for children with intellectual disabilities who are two (2) – seven (7) years old. The Play Activity Day is a wonderful introduction to Special Olympics. Children participate in ten (10) different activities, representing sports offered by Special Olympics. Children do not compete during the program. Rather, they play and enjoy the games and activities. The program helps increase the young children's strength and coordination for sports while introducing the children to group play and the cooperation and awareness of rules that it requires. At the completion of the morning, each child receives an award and is recognized for his/her achievements. The entire program takes about 2 ½ hours. Activities include:

- Ball Darts
- Dance/Ribbon Routine
- Basketball Shooting
- Soccer Kick
- Batting
- Standing Long Jump
- Tennis Ball Throw
- Ramp Bowling
- 25 Foot Dash
- Balance Beam Obstacle Course

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 the state office to fulfill your General Orientation requirement in becoming a Special Olympics Certified Coach!