



**Policy:** Recreational Swimming  
**Version:** Final 2.0  
**Date:** February 5, 2019

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## **Objective**

It is always Special Olympics' intent to take steps to ensure the health and safety of all Special Olympics participants. Special Olympics participants should remember that safety comes first and should take reasonable steps to help minimize the risks for injury or accidental drowning related to recreational swimming.

## **Policy Statement**

Special Olympics Wisconsin has determined, for the health and welfare of its participants, to prohibit recreational swimming at any time during Special Olympics competitions or activities unless specifically authorized and stated otherwise by Special Olympics WI with respect to a specific event. This policy applies not only to the time on-site at Special Olympics competitions or activities, but also while in transit to/from Special Olympics competitions or activities.

## **Definition of Recreational Swimming**

Recreational swimming is any swimming or swimming-like activities that occurs outside of sanctioned Special Olympics swimming or water-based sports (sailing, kayaking, canoeing, stand up paddle boarding) training or competition.

Examples would include participating in swimming or swimming-like activities (Jacuzzis, hot tubs) at pools, lakes, oceans, rivers, water parks, or other bodies of water during an athlete, team or delegations' "down time" during a Special Olympics training, competition, or activity. This includes but is not limited to housing and activity locations such as hotels, dormitories, military base housing, private residences, parks, and host town accommodations.

## **Applicability**

This policy is in effect from the time the participant comes under the supervision or purview of SOWI for a practice, competition or activity. This policy applies to all programs within SOWI.

## **Failure to Comply**

Any participant found in violation of this policy is subject to potential repercussions including but not limited to disqualification from competition, being sent home from training, competition, or activity at their or their legal guardian's expense, temporary suspension or permanent suspension. Any individual that knowingly allows recreational swimming to take place or fails to report it to the appropriate individual (Local Program Manager, Coach, HOD, SOWI Staff) is subject to the same repercussions.

## **Exceptions**

The only Special Olympics WI recreational swimming events allowed will be those conducted in accordance with the following rules and procedures in order to ensure the safety and well-being of all Special Olympics athletes, coaches and volunteers:

### Basic Rules

- There shall be at least one certified lifeguard on duty for every 25 swimmers in the water.
- The sole function of the lifeguard shall be to guard. If no relief lifeguard is available, the pool must be cleared, even for a short duration, when a lifeguard must leave the pool side.

## **Special Olympics Wisconsin**

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- The Event Director will review the Emergency Action Plan prior to each occasion.
- Athlete medical history forms shall be on site and relevant information shall be discussed with the lifeguard or medical personnel on duty in advance of the aquatic activity.
- Pool depths must be marked and easily visible.
- Local Program sponsored events must be pre-authorized by Special Olympics WI.

#### Emergency Action Plan

- An Emergency Action Plan shall be in place prior to any Special Olympics participants entering the water for any reason, be it training, competition or recreation. The Emergency Action Plan original plan should be written and reviewed by the staff on hand. The plan shall include the following: The procedure for obtaining emergency medical support if a medical doctor, para-professional or medical support is not present.
- The posts and areas of responsibilities for each lifeguard.
- The procedure for obtaining weather information or weather watch information, particularly if the event is outside.
- The procedure for reporting accidents.
- The chain of command in case of a serious accident, including who is assigned to talk to the press.
- The procedure for obtaining weather information particularly for Open Water swimming.
- All Local Program Emergency Action Plans must be pre-authorized by Special Olympics WI.

#### Supervisory Personnel Requirements

- An adequate number of supervisory personnel shall be present at all swimming sessions, events or recreational activities. The type of personnel will vary in accordance with the following requirements:
  - Recreational Programs
    - Enough certified lifeguards to provide a minimum ratio of guards to swimmers of 1 per 25.

#### **Communication of Policy**

This policy shall be communicated to all Athletes, Unified Partners, Local Program Managers, Coaches, Parents, Guardians and Staff. A written copy of this policy shall be furnished by SOWI upon request.



## Frequently Asked Questions

1. Does this policy apply to Local Program Managers, Coaches, Chaperones and Unified Partners?
  - a. Yes. Any individual under the auspices of Special Olympics must abide by this policy. Local Program Managers, Coaches, Chaperones and Unified Partners are in leadership positions when attending Special Olympics WI sanctioned events and must comply.
    - i. Application: staying at any hotel as part of a delegation.
2. Does this policy apply to SOWI Staff staying at hotels during competition?
  - a. Yes. SOWI staff are in leadership positions during competition and must comply.
3. Does this policy apply to Games Management Team (GMT) members and/or tournament officials staying at hotels during competition?
  - a. No
4. Does this policy apply to LETR officers staying at hotels during competition?
  - a. No
5. Does this policy apply to SOWI BOD members staying at hotels during competition?
  - a. No
6. Can an athlete participate in recreational swimming if under the supervision of their parent/guardian when traveling to/from a competition or staying at a non-SOWI host hotel during a competition?
  - a. Athletes traveling to/from competitions or staying with parents at non-SOWI host hotels may participate in recreational swimming if parent/legal guardian signs a SOWI waiver and release of liability specific to that event. The athlete must be officially signed out of the delegation and will no longer be under the auspices/supervision of SOWI. This exception is subject to the approval of the Head of Delegation and must be approved at least 24 hours in advance.
7. Can groups of athletes (2 or more) participate in recreational swimming if under the supervision of a parent/guardian?
  - a. No.
8. Does this policy apply to Local Programs that hold annual parties at a swim park or pool?
  - a. Yes. As long as it is a SOWI program activity, the policy applies.
9. Does this policy apply to an athlete's birthday party at a swim park and all the guests are SOWI athletes?
  - a. As long as it is not a sanctioned Special Olympics event, the policy does not apply.