



Certified Training School: **Special Olympics Wisconsin** **General Guide for Coaches**

I. Welcome

Welcome to the Special Olympics Wisconsin (SOWI) Movement! Your volunteer position as a coach will touch the lives of many Special Olympics athletes in a meaningful way. We are glad you have accepted this challenge. We welcome you to the Special Olympics family and thank you for your time and commitment. This guide will help you as you assume your role as a coach. The information presented here is meant to be a resource that you can refer to and use. If this handout does not contain the information you need, it will guide you to other resources that you can use.

II. Special Olympics Wisconsin

a. Mission & Philosophy

Mission: *To provide year-round sports training and athletic competition 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 the sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.*

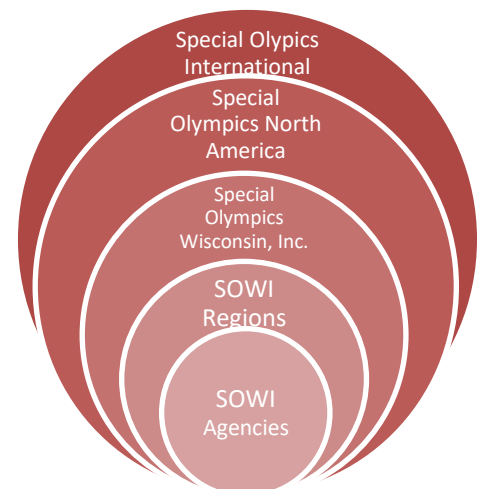
Philosophy: *Special Olympics is founded on the belief that people with intellectual disabilities can, with proper instruction and encouragement, learn, enjoy and benefit from participation in individual and team sports, adapted as necessary to meet the needs of those with special mental and physical limitations.*

Special Olympics believes that consistent training is essential to the development of sport 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 believes that every person with intellectual disabilities who is at least eight years old should have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from sports training and competition.

b. Structure of Special Olympics



III. Process to become an SOWI Certified Coach

a. Class A Registration and Screening

All coaches, chaperones and other volunteers who might have extended contact with athletes and/or financial responsibilities with SOWI are required to register with the Headquarters office and pass a background screening – *to ensure the safety of all Special Olympic athletes*. It is also the volunteer's responsibility to provide any updates in addresses or contact information to the Headquarters office.

Class A registration forms are available from your Agency manager, by calling your Region office. Registered coaches may also qualify for some insurance protection. Keep in mind; those persons coaching without being registered may be exposing themselves to liability.

b. Protective Behaviors

All Class A registered volunteers are required to take the *Protective Behaviors* online test. The *Protective Behaviors* test trains coaches, chaperones and volunteers to recognize and prevent emotional, physical and sexual mistreatment of athletes.

You can find Protective Behaviors test on the SOWI website at www.SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org

c. General Orientation

All Class A registered volunteers are *required* to take the General Orientation online test, which provides an overview and history of the Special Olympics movement, mission and philosophy and includes information on training, competition, SOWI's fundraising events, Healthy Athletes® and athlete Leadership Programs. You can find General Orientation test on the SOWI website at www.SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org

d. Certification

To become a Certified Coach, a person must be a registered Class A volunteer with Special Olympics and complete the online Coaches Training. You can find Coaches Training test on the SOWI website at www.SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org

e. Maintaining Sports Certifications

Coaching certifications expire on December 31 of the third calendar year from the date of the Coaches Training quiz was taken. In order to maintain a current certification, a coach must retake the online Coaches Training. If a certified coach lets his/her certification(s) expire, they will need to complete the online Coaches Training.

IV. Coaching Responsibilities

a. Sportsmanship: SOWI policies & procedures

Special Olympics promotes the use of good sportsmanship for all athletes, coaches, chaperones, family members, volunteers and spectators. Special Olympics enjoys a higher standard of sportsmanship than many other organizations. Athletes, coaches, fans, family members, and volunteers are all asked to follow good sportsmanship as outlined in the Codes of Conduct. Those persons violating either sportsmanship rules or the Code of Conduct may be subject to disciplinary action. Remember our motto, "Sportsmanship Makes Winners!"

b. Code of Conduct **form included**

The purpose of the SOWI Codes of Conduct is to establish high standards of behavior that will create a positive experience and ensure the safety and well-being of all athletes involved in training and competition. The following Codes of Conduct is available in the General Information section of the Competition Guide. Failure to comply with SOWI policies and Codes of Conduct may result in disciplinary actions. A full description of the disciplinary steps is given in the General Information section of the *Competition Guide*.

i. Coaches

Coaches are responsible for the safety and well-being of their athletes on and off the playing field (including all overnight activities and the duration of SOWI events). Coaches also have a responsibility to supervise and monitor their athletes' behavior, ensuring that it falls within the Code of Conduct.

ii. Athletes

All athletes are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct. Participation in Special Olympics is a privilege, not a right, and the Agency manager has the authority to make immediate accommodations until final decisions are made.

a. Athlete Profile – Tools for Coaches ****form included****

b. Athlete Behavior Characteristics & Strategies to Improve Learning ****handout included****

iii. Spectators

All spectators are expected to abide by the Spectator Code of Conduct in order to promote a positive environment for athletes to showcase their talents and compete in.

c. Medical Policies

i. Medical Policy Review

All athletes involved with Special Olympics are required to have a medical examination every three years. Medical forms are kept on file at the Headquarters office. **As a coach, you are responsible for ensuring that no athlete participates in your program without a current medical form on file with the Headquarters office.** You are also responsible for ensuring that an athlete does not have a medical restriction from participation in that sport. **Athletes without current medicals on file are NOT covered by Special Olympics Insurance and cannot train or compete in Special Olympics events.**

ii. Medical Emergency Information

Coaches are also held accountable for having updated medical information for each athlete in case of emergency. Further responsibilities are outlined in the General Information section of the Competition Guide.

iii. Medical Deadline Dates

Each sport season has a preceding medical deadline date. Those athletes wishing to participate in that season must have a medical form on file current through the end of that season's State games, prior to the deadline date to be eligible to participate in SOWI competitions for that season. Those athletes filing medicals after the deadline date may train, but may not compete in, SOWI competitions for that season. The deadline dates are as follows:

Flag Football	September 15
Fall Sports Season	October 1
Winter Games Season	December 1
Indoor Sports Season	February 1
Summer Games Season	April 1
Outdoor Sports Season	June 1

V. Risk Management

a. Safety Considerations for Practices

- i. First Aid Kit (basics, more can be added)
 1. Ice or cold packs
 2. Band aids
 3. Ace bandages
 4. Gauze pads
 5. Antiseptic ointment/spray
 6. Protective gloves
 7. Scissors
- ii. Access to a telephone/cell phone
- iii. Emergency contact number for each athlete
- iv. Current medical information on each athlete
- v. Transportation in case of emergency

b. Ensuring a Safe Practice Environment

- i. Safety Checklist ****form included****
- ii. Check all facilities, playing surfaces and equipment
- iii. Have an emergency plan
 1. Access to medical support
 2. Emergency response to inclement weather
 3. Crisis communication plan (included in the Agency Manager Handbook)
- iv. Check your athletes' clothing and equipment

c. Insurance Coverage and Policies ****form included****

Special Olympics provides an umbrella policy that covers athlete and coaches' liability and medical coverage as secondary coverage in addition to their own insurance. For more information about insurance coverage, please see the Agency Manager Handbook or call the Headquarters office.

d. Incident Report Forms ****form included****

Any type of accident occurring at a Special Olympics sponsored event should be documented using the Incident Report forms available in the Agency Manager Handbook. These forms should be filled out and forwarded to the Headquarters office.

VI. Training & Competition Guidelines

a. Athlete requirements

An athlete must be registered with SOWI to begin training. Once registered, an athlete must train for at least eight training sessions prior to a Regional or District competition. SOWI recommends that for optimal results an athlete should train for one hour at least three times per week for eight to 10 weeks for each sport prior to Regional/District competitions.

i. Medicals & Code of Conduct

Athletes must have a current medical form on file with the Headquarters Office before training begins. Ensure athletes have completed a Code of Conduct form.

b. Practice Guidelines ****handout included****

i. Plan an outline

1. Warm up
2. Light stretching
3. Conditioning (aerobic & strength components)
4. Skills Portion
5. Cool down/wrap up

c. Assessment Tests

Special Olympics is based on the premise of equal competition for equal ability. Divisioning is the process of placing athletes into groups for competition based on ability, gender and age. Assessment tests are designed to help determine ability level of athletes for divisioning individuals and teams in SOWI competitions. It is the coaches' responsibility to ensure that all athletes give their maximum effort in order to be placed in the appropriate division. All individual sports (with the exception of Bowling) require that coaches submit the athletes **BEST** score rather than average score.

d. Qualifying Games for Team Sports

All team sports require a minimum of two (documented) qualifying games against other Special Olympics teams prior to registration for district competition. Once a team roster has been set for preliminary games, it must stay the same throughout the rest of the season. This is done so that teams can be fairly evaluated and divisioned properly based on ability. It is also the coaches' responsibility to give the most accurate team information possible when registering for competition.

e. Registration for Competition

Each event offered by Special Olympics Wisconsin requires registration forms to be filed by given deadline dates for entry. **Failure to meet the deadline will forfeit the athlete's right to participate in the competition.** Registration information for each event offered can be found in the *Competition Guide*.

i. Special Need Forms **form included**

f. Certified Coach Requirements

Each team has been required to have a certified coach attached to the team (or group of athletes in an individual sport) in order to advance to State competition. The certified coach is also required to be in attendance at the State Games or the team/athletes will be disqualified.

g. Uniforms **handout included**

All athletes are required to be properly attired for competition or they will be disqualified. Rules concerning proper uniform requirements can be found in the rules section for each sport.

VII. Resources

- a. SOWI website: <http://www.SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org>
 - i. Agency Manager Handbook and Competition Guide
 - ii. Coaching guides
 - iii. SOWI policies
 - iv. Training forms / Entry forms
- b. Agency manager
- c. SOWI Staff
- d. Sport Resource Teams / State Certified Clinicians