

Local Program Development Guide

Section 5 – Communications

This section of the Local Program Development Guide addresses recommendations for internal and external communication, as well as branding and language guidance commonly sought by Local Programs.

Internal Communications

What do you need to communicate?

- Practice and meeting schedules
- Competition dates
- Fundraising activities
- Training opportunities for athletes and coaches
- Travel details
- Celebrations
- Information from SOWI

When do you communicate?

It is important to communicate on a regular basis, even when something isn't immediately planned. **Weekly communication is highly recommended.** For example: "We will start training for Winter Games in six weeks; look for the specific practice schedule to be out by ____."

When there may not be forthcoming events, consider communicating less frequently. Bi-weekly or monthly communication may be more appropriate at these times.

How do you communicate?

Consider that everyone has different preferences. Do not rely solely on one means of communication. Common communication approaches used by Local Programs include:

- Email
- Text messaging
- Newsletters (print and/or digital)
- Private/moderated social media groups with member/access control
- A phone tree
- Messaging app such as TeamSnap or GroupMe (SOWI reviewing various options)

Reminders:

- Keep all lists current! Be sure to add new athletes, families, and volunteers when they join a Local Program. Delete those who are inactive.

- Keep your communication lively to encourage engagement. At the same time, maintain professionalism in your communications — remember that you are representing Special Olympics!

External Communications

What do you need to communicate with the general public?

- Program news, upcoming events/activities, and ways to engage
- Achievements, milestones, and good news
- Athlete, coach, volunteer, and family profiles
- Volunteer opportunities
- Ways to support the Local Program financially – including donations, special events, and fundraisers

How do you communicate?

- Newsletters (print and/or digital)*
- Emails*
- Promotional flyers*
- Facebook events
- Town hall meeting
- Media relations*
- Website (SOWI is researching options)

*Templates available in the password-protected section of the SOWI website: <https://www.specialolympicswisconsin.org/login/>. Go to Tools & Resources then Marketing & Communications

Who's doing the talking?

Each Local Program should select a spokesperson, or a small group of public representatives, that are qualified and prepared to speak to the media or public about Special Olympics. Be sure to engage athletes, preferably those who have been trained as Special Olympics Global Messengers, in interviews.

- Media training provided by SOWI's Director of Communications
- Inform Director of Communications about any media opportunities

Using Special Olympics Letterhead

For communications on behalf of Special Olympics and/or the Local Program, such as letters to the community and/or donation requests, you may need to use Special Olympics Wisconsin letterhead. You can find it in the password-protected section of the SOWI website: <https://www.specialolympicswisconsin.org/login/> under Tools & Resources then Marketing & Communications.

Social Media

Local Programs are able to create a private, moderated Facebook group to communicate with athletes, parents, caregivers, coaches, etc. For guidance on how to set up a Facebook group, visit the password-protected section of the SOWI website: <https://www.specialolympicswisconsin.org/login/> under Tools & Resources then Marketing & Communications. Once the group is created, you will simply invite members to join. Be sure invite SOWI (@sowisconsin) to join the group too.

Best Practices for Managing Social Media on Behalf of Special Olympics

You should only make a social media account in the name of a Special Olympics Local Program with guidance from SOWI, following our social media protocols.

- This includes policies and guidance pertaining to the use of photos and images.
- Use the Special Olympics logo [in accordance with branding guidelines set forth in the SOI Branding Standards online](#).
- Do not publish confidential information about Special Olympics athletes, staff, volunteers, families, community partners or sponsors.
- Be mindful of copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of Special Olympics.
- At no point should Special Olympics accounts be used for the purpose of expressing personal or political beliefs or opinions. Keep your personal views separate.
- Do not use the Special Olympics name or logo to promote or endorse any product, religion, cause, political party, or candidate.
- Avoid arguments and confrontations online. If you see a comment that would warrant an official response from Special Olympics, contact SOWI.
- Delete any profane or derogatory comments. Always report posts that you feel are threatening, harassing, or inappropriate.
- Respect the privacy of others. Do not publish or tag photos of others without their permission. Avoid publishing someone's last name, school, or place of employment on social media if you do not have their permission.

Lastly, be sure to follow SOWI on the following social media channels and tag us (@sowisconsin)!

- [Facebook.com/SpecialOlympicsWisconsin](https://www.facebook.com/SpecialOlympicsWisconsin)
- [Twitter.com/SOWisconsin](https://twitter.com/SOWisconsin)
- [Instagram.com/SOWisconsin](https://www.instagram.com/SOWisconsin)

Branding & Language Guidelines

Special Olympics has extensive branding guidelines that are [available at Resources.SpecialOlympics.org](https://Resources.SpecialOlympics.org).

Logo

- SOWI Marketing & Communications will provide a standard logo for you use. Should your Local Program desire a more robust logo, still within brand standards, SOWI Marketing will connect you with our approved design agency. Design fees will be at the expense of the Local Program.

Uniforms

Please refer to pages 82-85 of the Special Olympics Branding Standards (<https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/brand-awareness-and-communication/branding/brand-guidelines/Brand-Identity-Guidelines-2018.pdf>) prior to ordering uniforms. It is strongly recommended that you contact SOWI Marketing for guidance and to review artwork prior to ordering uniforms.

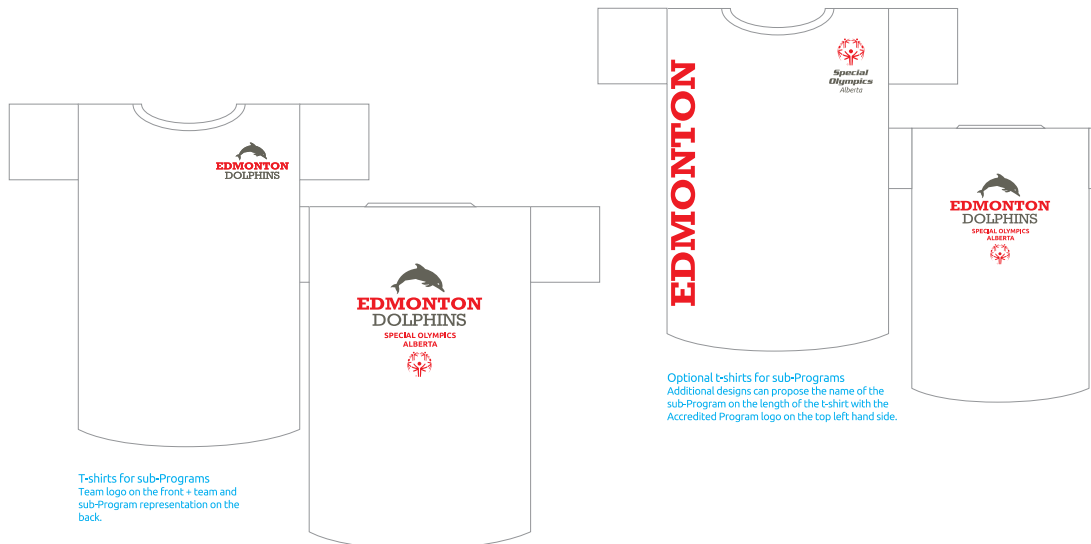
Special Olympics sub-Program Visual Identity Guidelines

Proper representation of a sub-Program

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Team Representation

Examples of how to properly represent a team through their team lock-up mark.



T-shirts for sub-Programs
Team logo on the front + team and sub-Program representation on the back.

Optional t-shirts for sub-Programs
Additional designs can propose the name of the sub-Program on the length of the t-shirt with the Accredited Program logo on the top left hand side.

Language Guidelines

It is critical that appropriate terminology is used when speaking about a Local Program. This helps to educate the public while reinforcing the organization's brand.

Special Olympics Intellectual Disability Terminology Guidelines can be viewed using this link: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/duouizmomqs2ydm/SONA-Terminology-Guidelines-July-2019.docx?dl=0>. The following information provides more detail about commonly used terms and acronyms in our movement.

Glossary of Terms

- **Athlete:** A person who is identified as having an intellectual disability who is at least 8 years of age and registers to participate in accordance with the SOI General Rules. This individual trains in an Official Sport or Recognized Sport for a minimum of eight weeks or longer during the calendar year and competes in local, state, or Program Special Olympics competitions. Children between the ages of 2-10 can participate in the Young Athletes Program.
- **Athlete Leadership Committee:** A committee comprised of athletes whose purpose is to facilitate discussion among athletes and pass along their suggestions to improve the program.
- **Athlete Medical Form:** Also referred to as a "Medical", contains pertinent athlete information, including emergency contacts and medical conditions. This form must be completed by a medical examiner before participation in Special Olympics. This form is also known as the Participation Form, and is due every three years.
- **Athlete Release Form:** Each athlete is required to submit a consent form to participate in Special Olympics.
- **Class A Volunteer:** Any person who volunteers for SOWI as a coach, chaperone, driver, overnight host, Unified Sports Partner, or otherwise in a manner that results in regular close contact with Special Olympics athletes. Class A Volunteers also include those who may assume administrative or financial duties such as Committee Members, Event Directors, or Board Members.
- **Class B Volunteer:** Any person who volunteers at a single event; One-day, or walk-on volunteers who do not have direct responsibility or close ongoing contact with athletes.
- **Division:** The competitive grouping of three to eight athletes in a particular sport based on age, gender, and ability level.
- **Global Messenger:** Athlete ambassadors who foster awareness and advocacy for the Special Olympics movement. Athletes must complete a training program in communications, speech writing, and presentations along with their local speech coach.

- **Healthy Athletes®:** Special Olympics Healthy Athletes®, made possible by the Golisano Foundation, is a program dedicated to providing health services and education to Special Olympics athletes, and changing the way health systems interact with people with intellectual disabilities.
- **Local Program:** The Local Program is the direct service unit for athletes and their family members within SOWI. The Local Program engages with the public to provide training and competition opportunities while creating inclusive communities. Training and competition are provided for individuals with intellectual disabilities and Unified Sports Partners. The Local Program is at the grassroots level of the Special Olympics movement.
- **SOI General Rules:** The Special Olympics, Inc. (SOI) General Rules provide the rules and guidelines for all activities and bind participants (including Local Coordinators) to the Special Olympics purpose, mission, and goals. View Special Olympics General Rules: <https://resources.specialolympics.org/governance-and-leadership-excellence/special-olympics-general-rules/general-rules>
- **Unified Sports®:** An inclusive sports program that combines approximately equal numbers of teammates with and without intellectual
- **Unified Champion Schools®:** Unified Champion Schools create social inclusion in schools by building on Special Olympics' values, principles, practices, and experiences. This programming strives to incorporate three components in schools: Unified Sports, inclusive student leadership and whole school engagement.
- **Unified Partner:** A person without an intellectual disability who trains in a Special Olympics sport and who competes at least once in a Special Olympics Game or competition at any level during the calendar year.

Common Special Olympics Acronyms

- **GMT:** Games Management Team
- **GOC:** Games Organizing Committee
- **HOD:** Head of Delegation
- **ID:** Intellectual Disability
- **LETR®:** Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics
- **SOI:** Special Olympics, Inc.
- **SONA:** Special Olympics North America
- **SOWI:** Special Olympics Wisconsin
- **YAC:** Youth Activation Council
- **YA:** Special Olympics Young Athletes