

SPECIAL OLYMPICS WISCONSIN



Special Olympics
Wisconsin
Be a fan.™

FAMILY HANDBOOK



SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org



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



SPECIAL OLYMPICS WISCONSIN

WHAT IS SPECIAL OLYMPICS?

Special Olympics Wisconsin (SOWI) is an accredited program of Special Olympics, Inc. (SOI), which is a global non-profit organization providing sports training and competition to individuals with cognitive disabilities.

Special Olympics programs are patterned after the Olympic Games. In fact, Special Olympics is one of three organizations authorized by the International Olympic Committee to use the word "Olympics" in its corporate name. Like the mainstream Olympics, SOI truly has a global presence with programs in every state and in more than 180 countries.

The organization serves more than 208 million athletes and 750,000 volunteers who take part in nearly 30,000 Special Olympics games around the world, involving 30 summer and winter sports.

In Wisconsin, Special Olympics serves nearly 10,000 athletes and has a volunteer base of more than 14,000 individuals.

MISSION

To provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for individuals eight years of age and older with cognitive disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendships with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

VISION

The Special Olympics movement will transform communities by inspiring people throughout the world to open their minds, accept and include people with cognitive disabilities and thereby celebrate the similarities common to all people.

VALUES

Mutual Respect, Positive Attitude, Accountability, Teamwork, and Dedication... Values SOWI lives by to create an environment of integrity where winning is more than coming in first.



TESTIMONIALS



"Special Olympics makes the lives of people with special needs a better place. It gives them opportunities to play sports and participate. It has provided me with more structure and given me a chance to excel in sports."

~Peter Chumas, Special Olympics athlete from Eau Claire

"It is nice to be in something where you are not teased all the time. I would not have the opportunity to train and compete in the sports I enjoy participating in if there were no Special Olympics."

~Adam Domino, Special Olympics Athlete from Wausau



"The family time we've spent at Special Olympics events is wonderful, the medals our son wins are an extra bonus, and [the health programs] are the icing on the cake!"

~The Gainey Family

WHY SHOULD MY FAMILY JOIN SOWI?

ATHLETE BENEFITS

Participation in sports brings significant benefits to people with cognitive disabilities of all ages and abilities. The following also reflects benefits of sports for everyone:

- **Physical:** Physical fitness, increased coordination, cardiovascular fitness and endurance.
- **Mental:** Knowledge of rules and strategy, along with increased self-esteem, self-confidence and pride.
- **Social:** Teamwork, interaction with people without cognitive disabilities, family pride, opportunity to travel, explore new places, and interests, as well as increase community awareness and acceptance. This results in a richer, more rewarding life, improved skills and increased confidence in school, work, home and social life.


These benefits have been verified by Dr. Elisabeth Dykens and Dr. Donald Cohen in their study entitled "Effects of Special Olympics on Social Competence in Persons with Mental Retardation," which was published in the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in February 1996.

FAMILY BENEFITS

A study recently conducted by the Special Olympics Global Collaborating Center, in conjunction with the University of Massachusetts, Boston entitled "The Positive Contributions of Special Olympics to the Family" found qualitative facts that were confirmed by those partaking in Special Olympics.

First, Special Olympics serves as a powerful engine for families of athletes to connect by providing opportunities for families to forge new relationships and strengthen existing ones.

Second, the organization provides athletes and their families with normative life experiences that are critical to healthy development. These enriching experiences can be found at all levels of the organization, as families naturally network in SOWI. They lean on each other for support, share experiences and cheer each other's athletes on.



SOWI was created, and exists today, to give individuals with cognitive disabilities¹ the opportunity to train and compete in year-round sports activities. To be eligible to participate as a registered SOWI athlete², a person must meet the following criteria:

1. Be at least eight years of age.

There is no maximum age limit. An athlete must be eight years of age by the medical deadline date in order for SOWI to process the medical forms and for the athlete to compete in that sport season. Individuals ages 2-7 may inquire about SOWI's Young Athletes Program (YAP).

2. Be identified by an agency or professional as having a:

a. Cognitive disability¹; or

b. Cognitive delay³ as determined by standardized measures such as intelligence quotient (IQ) or other generally acceptable measures; or

c. A closely related developmental disability. A "closely related developmental disability" means having functional limitations in both general learning⁴ and adaptive skills⁵ such as recreation, work, independent living, self direction or self care. However, persons whose functional limitations are based solely on a physical, behavioral, or emotional disability, or a specific learning or sensory disability are not eligible to participate as Special Olympic athletes, but may be eligible to volunteer for SOWI.

3. Agree to abide by the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules and the SOWI Athlete Code of Conduct.

4. Persons with multiple disabilities may participate in SOWI as long as they also meet the noted criteria above.

NOTE: No person shall, on the grounds of sex, race, religion, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied

ELIGIBILITY



benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity of SOWI.

¹ May also be used synonymously with intellectual disability.

² To be a registered SOWI athlete, eligible persons must complete an Application for Participation (medical form), a release form and register with one of over 200 SOWI accredited agencies.

³ Learning slower than one's typical peers and requiring specially designed instruction.

⁴ General learning limitation refers to substantial deficits in conceptual, practical and social intelligence that will result in performance problems in academic learning and/or general life functioning.

⁵ Adaptive skill limitations refers to an on-going performance deficit in skill areas considered essential to successful life functioning.



HOW DO I JOIN?

1. Contact the SOWI office at 800-552-1324. They will provide you with a contact name for your local Agency* as well as your regional Special Olympics office.
2. Obtain and complete the official SOWI Release Form and the Application for Participation in Special Olympics from your local Agency or download the forms from the website. (Athletes with Down syndrome may need to complete the Special Exam Form.)
3. Return your form(s) to the local Agency, who will then turn in your forms to the Program office by the appropriate deadline.

**If there is no local Agency near you, you can inquire with staff about how to start one in your community.*

WHY ARE MEDICAL FORMS NECESSARY?

Medical deadline dates are strictly enforced. Please work closely with your Agency manager to make sure medical deadlines are met.

It is your responsibility to maintain a valid medical form with the Program office. The Medical Forms are similar to those required for any other sports programs. Medical forms provide:

1. Necessary medical information, including a health history, health insurance information and emergency contacts, including physician, parent or guardian.
2. Insurance coverage by Special Olympics, Inc. as a secondary policy.
3. Emergency medical treatment in the event that a parent or guardian cannot be reached.
4. A Healthy Athletes application & allows SOWI to use photos/videos captured of the athlete in marketing efforts.

For more information about medical deadlines, visit the website.

Special Olympics aims to provide a variety of competition opportunities for athletes of all abilities by offering official events of various degrees of difficulty and challenge. Athletes can participate in specially modified events such as the 25-meters Assisted Walk or the 15-meter Flotation Race (Aquatics).

Events for Athletes with Physical Disabilities:

There are also events for athletes who use wheelchairs. Athletes who are not yet ready to play team sports can participate in Individual Skills competitions. For example, athletes can earn medals for performing such skills as dribbling in Basketball.

Motor Activity Training Program:

Athletes with severe challenges who do not yet possess the physical and/or behavioral skills necessary to participate in official Special Olympics sports may participate in the Motor Activity Training Program (MATP), a noncompetitive program.

Unified Sports:

Athletes with higher abilities can participate in Special Olympics Unified Sports®, a

program designed to bring together equal numbers of athletes with and without cognitive disabilities on the same team. Efforts are made to match ability levels and age-appropriate peers.

Participation in Other Programs:

Special Olympics athletes may participate in other sports programs while participating in Special Olympics (e.g. Special Olympics softball team and a city league softball team).

However, sports governing bodies, such as the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association, leagues and schools may have rules prohibiting athletes from participating on more than one team per season. Coaches should encourage their athletes to participate in all sports programs, but they must be careful to protect their athletes' eligibility.

What Rules does Special Olympics Follow?

SOWI follows the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules which are based on International Sports Federation and National Governing Body rules. Rules are available on the SOWI website by sport.

PARTICIPATION





SPORTS SEASONS

Special Olympics Wisconsin offers training and competition in a wide variety of sports. Ask your Agency manager what sports are available in your local program. SOWI, per SOI recommendations, allows athletes to compete in one sport per season listed below:

WINTER GAMES

(December-January)

Alpine Skiing
Cross Country Skiing
Snowboarding
Snowshoe Racing
Speedskating

INDOOR SPORTS TOURNAMENT

(February-March)

Basketball
Gymnastics

SUMMER GAMES

(March-June)

Aquatics (swimming)
Athletics (track & field)
Soccer
Powerlifting

OUTDOOR SPORTS TOURNAMENT

(June-August)

Bocce
Cycling
Golf
Softball and Tee Ball
Tennis

FALL SPORTS TOURNAMENT

(September-December)

Bowling
Volleyball

TRAINING

ATHLETES

Athletes train a minimum of eight sessions for each sport within two months prior to Area/District competition. Local Agency training schedules may vary.

COACHES

All coaches are volunteers. SOWI requires all coaches and volunteers be registered and screened prior to their involvement.

Special Olympics Wisconsin trains coaches through sports training schools conducted year-round throughout the state.

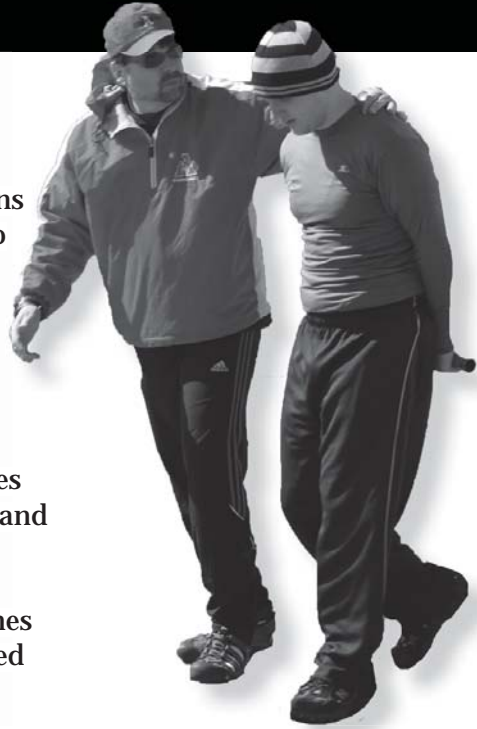
To become a certified coach, volunteers must view the General Orientation video, attend a sports-specific Certified Training School, and complete a minimum of 10 hours of practical coaching experience with Special Olympics athletes.

Certified Training Schools are taught by knowledgeable, experienced clinicians who train coaches to work with athletes of all ability levels. In addition, Special Olympics Wisconsin provides a variety of resources to ensure all athletes receive safe, quality sports training.

HOME TRAINING

No matter what your ability level, family members can help train their athlete at home. You can attend a training school or order sports training materials.

Something as basic as taking a walk together conditions your athlete. Home training not only helps your athlete, but it can help you. Best of all, it's fun!



HOW DOES DIVISIONING WORK?

What makes Special Olympics different than other sports organizations is divisioning. As outlined in the Special Olympics Sports Rules Books, athletes are seeded into competitive divisions based on their age, sex, and ability. Divisions are established so they are "even."

An "even" division is one in which all participants, based on training and competition performance records, have a reasonable chance of winning. In situations where there are not enough competitors to hold competition in a certain age or sex group, the athletes are combined within the same ability range. This division is then called an "open division."

Because the goal for each Special Olympics athlete is to do his/her best, every athlete receives either a medal or a ribbon for competing.

WHY ARE THERE RULES?

Special Olympics Inc. follows the National Governing Body rules for each sport to ensure the athlete's safety during trainings and competitions. It also creates a fair atmosphere during each tournament and throughout advancement.

Athletes, coaches, spectators, and volunteers can expect the same rules at every level of the organization. Failing to enforce the rules is unfair to the athletes who have trained and competed properly within the rules.

SPORTSMANSHIP

It is expected that everyone abides by their respective code of conduct—including athletes, spectators, volunteers, and staff because Special Olympics believes "sportsmanship makes winners"!



WHO QUALIFIES FOR COMPETITION?

Special Olympics Wisconsin stresses the benefits of training and competition at the local level. Athletes train a minimum of eight sessions over a recommended two months time to qualify for an Area or District competition. Depending on the sport, an athlete's place will determine their advancement to the next level of competition.

Note: Due to facility limitations, some State competitions have quotas which limit the number of athletes who advance from Area/District competitions. Final selection for State competition is determined by the advancement policy in the SOI General Rules. In some sports, SOWI has a third level of competition, called Regionals, held between Area and State competitions, which follows the same rules for advancement.



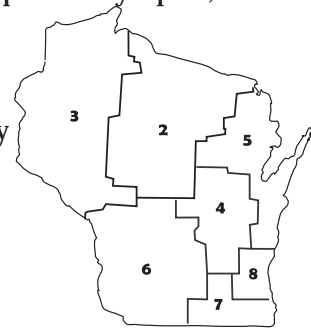
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

HOW IS SOWI ORGANIZED?

Special Olympics, Inc., founded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver in 1968, is the organization which governs all aspects of Special Olympics. SOI gives states and other nations the right to use the name "Special Olympics," and provides guidelines for them to follow.

SOWI is accredited regularly by SOI to ensure strict compliance to these guidelines. SOWI is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors which appoints and consults with a President who develops and implements the overall state program.

Local programs register annually with SOWI and are coordinated by Agency managers who report to Area and program office staff. Athletes and families are the foundation of the organization.



HOW IS MONEY RAISED?

SOWI is a not-for-profit organization 501(c)3. Contributions from individuals, organizations, government/restricted grants, corporations, foundations, and special events provide the resources necessary.

The Law Enforcement Torch Run ® (LETR) is the largest grass-roots fundraiser for Special Olympics. What started in Wichita, Kansas in 1981 as a one-day run has now expanded to include 35 countries and is a year-round fundraising program. Wisconsin's Torch Run is one of the top in the world involving nearly 1,000 officers from 170 law enforcement agencies raising over \$1.5 million in their local communities. The LETR is managed by voluntary law enforcement and SOWI staff.

Throughout the year, Agencies can help raise funds for SOWI and their own agencies at the following events:

- Polar Plunge®
- Lock up a Cop
- The Worlds Largest Truck Convoy®
- Motorcycle rides
- Truck Pulls
- Final Leg to Stevens Point

HEALTHY ATHLETES

Healthy Athletes is designed to help athletes improve their health and fitness, leading to an enhanced sports experience and improved well being. Athletes receive a variety of health services through screenings and instruction conducted at Special Olympics events by volunteer professionals including dentists, hygienists, physicians, pharmacists, podiatrists, nurses, optometrists, opticians, dieticians and audiologists.

Products, equipment and cash donations from local, national and international companies and organizations help to support these free programs. We invite all Special Olympics Wisconsin registered athletes to attend the screenings even if they are not competing at the tournament where the Healthy Athletes discipline is offered. The following programs are available at upcoming State competitions:

Special Smiles: Offers oral health screenings and education, personal preventive products and, if the athletes competes in a contact sport, a free mouth guard as well as referral advice for follow-up care.

Opening Eyes: Offers extensive vision and eye health tests, refraction for those requiring further screening, free prescription eyeglasses and protective sports eye wear, and referral advice for follow-up care.

Healthy Hearing: Offers hearing tests by audiologists and referral advice for follow-up care.

Health Promotions: Offers education in healthy eating, lifestyle choices, fun ways to increase physical fitness, tobacco avoidance, sun safety and skin care. Athletes also receive their Body Mass Index score, Bone Mineral Density and Blood Pressure results.

Fun Fitness: Offers comprehensive physical therapy screenings and is designed to assess, improve and educate participants on flexibility, functional strength and balance.

PROGRAMS



Fit Feet: Screens athletes' total feet and ankle health and also checks for proper shoes and socks. Athletes are educated on general foot care and are provided with sneaker balls and possibly orthotics and/or shoes if available.

MedFest: Provides athletes and potential athletes with a free comprehensive physical exam, giving them clearance for participation in Special Olympics. Pre-registration is needed to participate in MedFest and new athletes are welcome if the Special Olympics Release Form is completed ahead of time.



YOUNG ATHLETES

Young Athletes™ introduces children, ages 2 - 7, both with and without cognitive disabilities, and their families to the world of Special Olympics by pursuing the following goals:

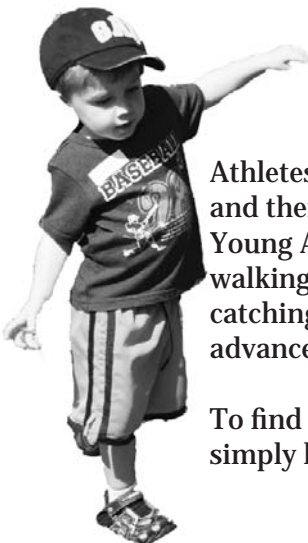
- Engage children with cognitive disabilities through developmentally appropriate play activities designed to foster physical, intellectual and social development;
- Welcome family members of children with cognitive disabilities to the Special Olympics network of support;
- Raise awareness about the abilities of children with cognitive disabilities through inclusive peer participation, demonstrations and other events.



Young Athletes is a versatile program that is designed for families to play with their young athletes at home in a fun atmosphere but is also appropriate for kindergartens, schools and play groups.

The benefits for this program have been proven worldwide. First and foremost, these activities will help the children improve physically, cognitively and socially. The flexibility of Young Athletes ensures the opportunity to welcome families and their young children to the Special Olympics family. Young Athletes activities consist of foundational skills, walking and running, balance and jumping, trapping and catching, throwing, striking, kicking and incorporates advanced skills.

To find out if there is a Youth Athletes near you or to simply learn more, please visit the SOWI website.



PROGRAMS

CAMP SHRIVER

Camp Shriver is a unique experience that brings together both children with and without disabilities to engage in camp activities alongside one another. In doing so, the camp creates opportunities to promote the social inclusion of children with disabilities and gives children without disabilities the opportunity to interact with and achieve a greater understanding and appreciation of their peers with disabilities.

Unlike the school setting, where the differences between children with and without disabilities are often accentuated, the Camp Shriver model stresses the importance of recognizing the similarities that exist among all children who participate. Camp Shriver uses sports as a venue for improving not only campers' sports skills, but also for improving:

- Self-Esteem
- Social Skills
- Ability to build friendships with peers

ATHLETE LEADERSHIP

Special Olympics Athlete Leadership Programs (ALPs) train athletes to serve in meaningful leadership roles other than or in addition to that of "competitor". They offer athletes an opportunity to participate as partners in all aspects of the Special Olympics movement in Wisconsin. Currently, Special Olympics athletes are serving as coaches, officials, Athlete Advisory Council members, Board members, ambassadors, Global Messengers and mentors.

ALPs allows athletes to have self-determination in the role they will play in Special Olympics, puts athletes in meaningful positions of influence and leadership throughout the organization, provides training to give them the tools they need to be successful in these new roles, and maximizes their potential both on and off the playing field.



SUPPORT PROGRAMS

GET INTO IT

Get Into It™ is a K-12 service-learning curriculum developed to introduce Special Olympics to young people, explain cognitive disabilities, and encourage youth to become involved in the movement by working to dispel the myths and stereotypes that surround people with cognitive disabilities. This curriculum is available at no cost to schools and teachers worldwide and is fit for students with and without disabilities.

To request a kit for your school or to learn more, please visit the website.



R-WORD CAMPAIGN

The R-Word Campaign is a campaign to “Spread the Word to End the Word”™ in an effort to raise the consciousness of society about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the R-word (retard or retarded) and encourage people to pledge to stop the use of the R-word.

The campaign, created by youth, is intended to engage schools, organizations, and communities to rally and pledge their support at www.r-word.org. Events take place year round, however many activities are centered annually around March as the first Wednesday of that month has been proclaimed by many states as “Spread the Word to End the Word” Day. To learn more about how you can start the campaign in your community, please visit the Special Olympics Wisconsin website.



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

GET ACTIVE!

Families and friends of Special Olympics athletes are encouraged to play an active role in their community Special Olympics program, to share in the training of the athletes, and to assist in the public education efforts needed to create greater understanding of the emotional, physical, social and spiritual needs of people with cognitive disabilities and their families.

Choose one or all. It's your choice!

- Cheerleader
- Driver
- Home Trainer
- Spokesperson
- Local Agency Management Team Member
- Coach

GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

Memorial Programs invest in the Future of Special Olympics. Give a gift to Special Olympics in remembrance of a friend or loved one that assists in providing year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for nearly 10,000 children and adults with cognitive disabilities.

This expression of love through a Memorial Gift furthers our mission by giving people with cognitive disabilities continuous opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship.

For information or to give a memorial gift please call 800-552-1324.

Each Memorial Gift is acknowledged to your loved one's family or others with a card sent according to your wishes. Gift amounts are confidential.



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