

TRAINING

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ATHLETE TRAINING GUIDELINES

Special Olympics Wisconsin (SOWI) offers year-round training and competition in a wide variety of sports, both team and individual. The *Athlete Medical Form* and the *Athlete Release Form* in Special Olympics serve as an athlete's registration for Special Olympics and must be completed and approved before an athlete may participate in any Special Olympics training program. 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 competition.

SOWI follows the *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules*, which are based on International Sports Federation and National Governing body rules. Rules can be found on the Special Olympics, Inc. website at SpecialOlympics.org. Because Special Olympics is a sports program for individuals with intellectual disabilities, people sometimes question the "fairness" of sports rules enforcement. But as veteran coaches will tell you, knowing and playing by the rules is one of the greatest benefits Special Olympics offers its athletes. Why?

1. Impaired does not mean incapable. Special Olympics athletes are capable of learning and competing within sports rules. Challenging athletes in this manner adds to the pride and sense of accomplishment they experience.
2. It is unfair to athletes who are properly trained and who are following the rules to compete against others who are not.
3. Many Special Olympics athletes eventually move into other sports programs (school, parks and recreation, community leagues, etc.). They will be better prepared for that transition if learning and competing by rules is one of the skills they take with them from Special Olympics.

Coaching Guides

Coaching Guides are sport-specific training manuals designed to aid coaches, teachers and family members in training individuals with intellectual disabilities. Each guide provides an overview of the sport, equipment, facilities, long-term goals, short-term objectives, task analysis, teaching suggestions and more. *Coaching Guides* are available on the Special Olympics, Inc. website at SpecialOlympics.org.

CERTIFICATION AND RECERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

State Games Certification

The required certification process requires all coaches to complete the SOWI on-line General Coaches' Certification (available at www.specialolympicswisconsin.org). The General Coaches' Certification will replace the sport-specific certification as the requirement for advancement to the state games. All current certified coaches may continue to advance with their current sport-specific certification until their certification expires at which time they will be required to complete the general certification. Coaches will be required to complete the general certification every three years. General certifications expire on December 31 of the third calendar year from the date the certification was completed.

State Games Certification Requirement

Advancement to State-level competition requires certified coaches to be registered as part of an advancing delegation and in attendance at the State Games. Each team advancing to State is required to have a certified coach (i.e. for two basketball teams advancing to State, two certified individuals are required). Likewise, each individual sport that advances to State-level competition is also required to have a certified coach. Coaches may only serve as the certified coach for one sport at the same State tournament. Certification must be completed on-line and must be completed no later than the Thursday following the State Games registration deadline in order to attend that State Games event. Teams or groups of individuals who do not have a certified coach who can be in attendance at the Games will not be allowed to advance to the State level. Teams or individuals found to be without the certified coach in attendance at the Games will be ejected.

Sport-Specific Certification

Sport-specific certification will continue to be offered, but will no longer act as the requirement to advance to the state games. Sport-specific certification will be required for all coaches wishing to attend National or World Competitions (USA Games, National Invitational Tournaments, etc.). To become certified, a coach must be a registered Class A volunteer, complete the SOWI General Orientation, and attend a Certified Training School. Coach certifications expire on December 31 of the third calendar year from the date of the sport-specific coaches training that was attended.

Minimum age to act as a coach for SOWI is 16

Class A Volunteers who are 16 or 17 years old and wish to coach at each practice and competition must be under the supervision of a SOWI registered Class A volunteer who is 18 years or older (the Class A volunteer need not be a certified coach). In order to act as the certified coach at State Games Tournament, a minor coach must complete the general coaching certification. Minor coaches may not act as a chaperone. Athletes must be chaperoned by a registered Class A volunteer who is 16 or older under the 1:4 chaperone to athlete ratio.

Maintaining Sport-Specific Certifications

Coaching certifications expire on December 31 of the third calendar year from the date of the sport-specific training that was attended. In order to maintain a current sport-specific certification, a coach must complete the General Coaches Certification or retake the sport-specific certified training school **prior** to the December 31 expiration date. If a certified coach lets his/her certification(s) expire, they will need to complete the sport-specific certified training school again.

Certified Training

All SOWI Certified Training Schools (CTS) include SOWI information, risk management, safety, Code of Conduct, policies, etc., as well as a sport-specific component. There will be a certain number of CTS opportunities in every Region for coaches to attend. When possible, CTS opportunities will be advertised on the calendar on the SOWI website and additionally, a CTS flyer will be sent to Agency managers to advertise to their volunteers. Agency managers are able to schedule a CTS opportunity for their Agency and/or community by directly contacting the Director of Training. The process for an Agency manager to schedule a CTS is as follows:

- 1) Contact the Director of Training
- 2) Determine the date, time and location and number of anticipated participants
- 3) The Director of Training will work directly with the clinicians to make arrangements for paperwork and training materials for the CTS. When possible, SOWI will advertise the CTS on the SOWI website and it will be open for all coaches to attend.

If an Agency manager is interested in scheduling a CTS with a clinician who is not a State Certified Clinician, they must contact and get approval from the Regional Athletic Director or the Program Services Department at the SOWI Headquarters office. A clinician who is not a State Certified Clinician can only conduct a CTS with a SOWI representative present.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

Q. What do I need to do to maintain my general coaching certification?

A. The general coaching certification must be completed every three years.

Q. Can I complete a continuing education course or certified training school to maintain my general coaching certification?

A No. The general coaching certification can only be renewed by retaking the course every three years.

Q. For my sport-specific certification, do I have to attend a sport-specific training school for EVERY sport I am certified in?

A. You do not need a sport-specific certification in every sport in order to coach, however in order to be able to coach at the national or world level, you need the specific sport certification that you are coaching in.

Q. If I obtain a new sport certification, will it automatically re-certify my other sport-specific certifications?

A. Yes.

Q. For my sport-specific certification, if I attend a seminar, conference, or in-service for my job, will that count as the educational course?

A. No.

Q. If my sports certifications do expire, how do I get certified again?

A. You will need to retake the online General Coaches Certification.

Q. Will I be notified if my certification is about to expire?

A. All coaches will receive two letters informing them of upcoming expirations. They will receive the first letter in June for a six-month notice and a second letter in November for a one-month notice. Additionally, Agency managers will still be able to track coach expirations on the website as well as on their volunteer rosters they receive.

Q. If I am a USA or World Games coach will I be exempt for recertification?

A. There will be allowances and/or exceptions pertaining to recertification requirements for USA and World Games coaches that will be at the discretion of the Program Services Department.

Q. How do I schedule or arrange a Certified Training School?

A. These are the steps for scheduling a Certified Training School:

1. Contact the Director of Training
2. Secure a date, time and location for the training school to occur;
3. The Director of Training will help find a clinician for the CTS, post the training school on the website, and provide the necessary paperwork.

Q. Can I use someone from my community to conduct a training school?

A. Yes, you may still use a clinician who is from your community; however, in order to do so, you must coordinate the training school through your Regional Athletic Director or the Director of Training.

Q. Will the Regional offices still be scheduling training schools?

A. Yes, the Regional will continue to schedule training schools.

TRAINING SITE SAFETY CHECKLIST

Accreditation standards require that all training facilities and equipment are safe with a first aid kit, athlete emergency contacts and a phone and/or transportation available in case of an emergency.

The checklist below is not intended to cover every possible situation, but acts as a guideline for areas which could constitute injury hazards.

Acceptable?

- | Yes | No | <u>Playing Surfaces – Indoor</u> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Irregular floor surfaces (wood separations, splinters, etc.)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Surfaces clean and free of dust, gum, wet or greasy areas, loose pieces of paper, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Electrical floor plate and outlet coverings fixed properly in position? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Electrical cords away from participant area and taped securely? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | All extra equipment removed? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sufficient buffer zone between spectators? |
| | | <u>Playing Surfaces – Outdoor</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Condition of turf (pot-holes, mud, etc.)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Puddles drained off? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Trash, glass, sharp objects, sharp-edged rocks, etc. on the field? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Obvious and hidden grates well-secured? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sufficient buffer zone between spectators? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Goal posts, goalie cages, baseball bases, etc. installed properly? |
| | | <u>Walls</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hanging ropes or electrical lines? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Moveable equipment flush or appropriately fastened to wall? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Protruding handles or cranks? |
| | | <u>Lighting</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | All areas adequately lit? |
| | | <u>Equipment</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Personal equipment (i.e. clothing, footwear, protective equipment) appropriate to the sport? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Activity equipment (i.e. sticks, balls, goals, nets, bats, poles, whistles, cones, padding and mats) can meet the demands of the sport? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Athletes have removed jewelry? |
| | | <u>Emergency</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | A first aid kit is available on site? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | A copy of athletes' Application for Participation in Special Olympics Forms with emergency contacts, insurance and medical information is on site? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Telephones within easy access? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Vehicle within easy access? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Crisis Communication Section of Agency Manager Handbook? |