

Communications and Public Relations

Communications & Marketing

Our brand is our reputation, a reputation shared by all of the programs within Special Olympics. This reputation exists in the hearts and minds of the public and our stakeholders. Our reputation is informed primarily by what we do but it is also influenced by what and how we communicate.

When communicating the Special Olympics brand there are broadly three main audiences:

General public. We cannot assume that members of the general public know who Special Olympics is and what we do. Communications with the general public need to be simple and direct in order to establish recognition and the right associations with our brand.

Members (athletes) & supporters. Communications with athletes and supporters focus on deepening the nature of the relationship through relevant information delivered over time. Although these communications may contain more information than for the general public, they will still need to be simple and focused.

Sponsors & partners. This audience includes other programs within the Special Olympics Movement, operational and existing sponsorship partners. Communications reflect a more professional relationship with Special Olympics and contain a greater degree of detail and nuance.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Consider that everyone has different preferences. Do not rely solely on one means of communication.

Ways to communicate:

- Email
- Text messaging
- Private/moderated groups on Facebook with member/access control
- A phone tree
- Press release

Reminders:

- Keep your list 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 so that others will continue to be engaged. However, always maintain professionalism — remember that you are representing Special Olympics!

What coverage to expect from local media:

- Overall education/awareness about the Local Program, including its needs and activities
- Upcoming competitions

- Results from competitions
- Athletes and/or coach profiles
- Volunteer recruitment needs
- Assistance with fundraising activities

What to communicate with the general public:

- Program news, 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
- Upcoming events

COMMUNICATIONS STYLE GUIDE – TELLING OUR STORY

These simple suggestions will assist you in creating powerful messages that express our mission.

Do's:

- Write the message with your target audience in mind. Look at your communications from the perspective of the person receiving the message.
- Identify the most appropriate entry point for your target audience. While this might be the sporting achievement of one of our athletes, it could also be a story growing out of one of our health, community or education programs.
- Tell stories about athletes and volunteers that communicate transformation, achievement and community.
- Become familiar with Special Olympics [language guidelines](#). Use language that is inclusive: 'We' and 'Our'.
- Use headings to quickly tell the reader what your story or content is about.
- Keep it short & sweet! After you have written your message, re-read it and look for any words you can take out. The quicker they can read your message, the more likely your audience is to read and understand it. Use bullets to give information quickly.
- Create contrast between headlines and body text, large image and smaller details.
- Use design, images and wording to communicate that we are athletecentric.
- Caption photographs with the names of the athletes and create context.
- Left or right alignment is stronger and more interesting.

Don'ts:

- Avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Avoid busy flyers and make sure to leave plenty of white space to let the information breath.

- Avoid using all capitals except in short titles or headers. (Remember that all caps are perceived by some as shouting in written media).

VISUAL IDENTITY

The Special Olympics Wisconsin brand mark (logo) should always be used in its full lock-up version, as shown below. The symbol can NOT be used on its own without the Logotype. The Special Olympics Wisconsin logo is available in a variety of approved colors and file formats. Please contact the SOWI Marketing Department for assistance.



BRAND IN ACTION

- [Merchandise guidelines](#)
- [Uniform ordering](#)
- [Letterhead template](#)
- [Presentation template](#)
- [News release template](#)

- [Award service certificate](#)
- [Color palette](#)
- [Ubuntu font guide](#)

USING TECHNOLOGY

Social Media including Facebook Groups

SOWI uses Facebook Groups as a way to connect with current and athletes, coaches, parents, and caregivers.

Using All Social Media Platforms (including Personal Use)

- Always protect confidential and proprietary information. 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. Delete any profane or derogatory.
- 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.
- Social sites are just that – social. While privacy does not exist in the world of social media, almost every social media platform has privacy settings that can help protect your privacy.
- Your personal and professional life could overlap and may reflect on the author personally and/or professionally. Remember, even after being deleted, comments and posts continue to live online in archival systems.
- [Local Program social media guidelines](#)

Facebook Groups

- At no point should Special Olympics Wisconsin Facebook Groups be used for the purpose of expressing personal beliefs or opinions. Keep your personal views separate.
- Avoid conflicts of interest and maintain a distinction between your personal identity and the identity you represent on behalf of Special Olympics.
- Avoid arguments and confrontations online. If you see a comment that would warrant an official response, contact Special Olympics Wisconsin.
- Monitor your Facebook Group on a daily basis to respond to questions and comments as needed – remember, social media is a dialogue, not a one-way communication.
- [How to create a Facebook group](#)

Other Means of Technology

Technology can be used in many ways to bolster a Local Program. Considering using one of the following free online tools.

Dropbox

- Create folders with meaningful headings
- Add section titles to create a path of reference
- Add to your Dropbox account, then continue to add or make changes

Google Docs

- Easily edit and style with tools to help format text/documents
- Choose from hundreds of fonts and add links, images, drawings, tables, etc.
- Access, create, and edit your documents wherever you go – from your phone, tablet, or computer

*NOTE: Special Olympics does not endorse these products, but is citing them for the purposes of illustration.



Language Guidelines

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

View the Special Olympics Disability Language Guidelines:

[http://resources.specialolympics.org/News/Resources_Updates/Good To Have The Special Olympics Disability Language Guidelines.aspx#.WV1Q4YqQz1L](http://resources.specialolympics.org/News/Resources_Updates/Good_To_Have_The_Special_Olympics_Disability_Language_Guidelines.aspx#.WV1Q4YqQz1L)

Resources

The Special Olympics Resources site is a self-service website that includes a variety of tools and valuable resources. Local Programs should contact the Accredited Program for additional resources.

View Special Olympics Resources: <http://resources.specialolympics.org/ResourcesDefault.aspx>

Sample Checklists, Tools, and Best Practices

The following resources are offered as suggestions based on Local Program needs. You may customize the forms in this Resources section to suit your individual needs. Please check with the Accredited Program to determine if they have an alternate form for these resources that can be utilized by the Local Program.

- Local Program Management Team Position Descriptions
- Local Program Management Team Training Checklists
- Sport Training and Competition Checklist
- Codes of Conduct- Athletes, Coaches, Family Members
- Developing an Emergency Management Plan
- Incident Action Steps Card
- Inclement Weather Policy