

# Special Olympics Delaware

## ATHLETE PARTICIPATION POLICIES

A person's participation in Special Olympics Delaware (SODE), as an athlete or volunteer is an opportunity and privilege; it is not an entitlement. The safety, health and well being of all participants in this program is of the utmost importance to SODE. SODE also desires to safeguard the reputation and well being of the organization. Therefore, SODE reserves the right to limit, or exclude, an individual's participation in an activity and/or the program for behavior that is deemed to be inappropriate, illegal and/or potentially harmful. SODE has developed the following policies and guidelines for participation in its programs.

### 2.1 Eligibility

#### 2.1a Athlete Eligibility

Persons are eligible to be an athlete for Special Olympics provided they are:

- Persons age two (2)\* and above who are considered to have an intellectual disability\*\* (as determined by their localities).
- Persons who have closely related developmental disabilities\*\*\* such as those who have functional limitations, both in general learning and in adaptive skills such as recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care.

***Note:** People with functional limitations based solely on a physical, behavioral, emotional, specific learning disability, or sensory disability are not eligible.*

\* Individuals ages 2 - 7 may train and participate in demonstration events and in the Young Athletes Program. Individuals age 8 and above may compete in all Special Olympics events and competitions.

\*\*Any person two (2) years of age or older who is identified as having an intellectual disability by an agency or a professional in any given local area is considered eligible for Special Olympics. Other terms that may be used synonymously with intellectual disability include: cognitive disabilities or mental handicaps.

\*\*\*When the term "development disability" or other similar descriptor is used to identify the person, eligibility should be determined by whether or not the person has functional limitations in **both general learning and adaptive skills**. "**Developmental disability**" is the term most often used to describe persons with both limitations. Other terms that may be used synonymously with developmental disability are developmental handicap, developmentally delayed, or severe disabilities.

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

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- **Adaptive Skill Limitations** refers to on-going performance deficit skill areas considered essential to successful life functioning. These adaptive skill areas include: *communication, self-care, home-living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, recreation/leisure, and work.*

### 2.2 Alcohol and Tobacco Policies

Special Olympics General Rules – Article 4 Section 4.09 (a) and Section R.1 of the Official Special Olympics Summer Sports Rules 2004–2007 Revised Edition Use of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco Products states that: ***No accredited Program shall knowingly permit the use of any alcohol or tobacco products (including cigarettes) at any Special Olympics training or competition venue.***

#### 2.2a Tobacco Policy

Special Olympics Delaware events are Smoke Free Events. Special Olympics Delaware subscribes totally to the adoption and implementation of this policy and will view any infringement very seriously. Smoking will not be allowed in the sports venues or in/around the field of play at outdoor sports competitions. Smoking will also not be allowed in or around areas that are entrances and exits or viewing areas for athletes, volunteers and spectators. This policy is also in effect for practice and training sites.

*Everyone involved with an event or training must observe this policy, e.g. volunteers, officials, coaches, program directors, unified partners, athletes and staff.*

#### 2.2b Alcohol Policy

Special Olympics Delaware considers the safety and welfare of all participants to be of paramount importance. It is expected that each Program Director, coach and sport volunteer is fully aware of the responsibility undertaken in bringing a team of athletes to compete at a Special Olympics event. The athletes will require supervision and care 24 hours per day and their Program Directors, coaches and sport volunteers are required to be capable of providing that level of care at all times. At any time during the day or night, a Program Director, coach or sport volunteer could be called upon to respond to an issue/incident with an athlete. It is essential that the Program Director, coach or sport volunteer be capable of responding to such situations. Therefore, Special Olympics Delaware considers the consumption of alcohol while responsible for the care for athletes to be a serious infringement and a breach of its policy regarding alcohol.

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*Everyone involved with the an event or training must observe this policy, e.g. volunteers, officials, coaches, program directors, unified partners, athletes and staff.*

### **2.3 Housing Policy**

Special Olympics Delaware provides sanctioned housing for Summer Games only. If housing is desired for other events then programs are responsible to secure their own housing and may not register under the Special Olympics name or use any funds from Special Olympics Delaware. Likewise if programs choose not to stay in housing provided by Special Olympics Delaware at Summer Games but choose to use other housing they may not register under the Special Olympics name or use any funds from Special Olympics. If a program is using housing outside of Special Olympics Delaware sanctioned housing Special Olympics Delaware assumes no responsibility for any problems that may arise.

### **2.4 Policy Regarding Volunteers & Staff Dating Special Olympics Athletes**

Among the Special Olympics movement's highest priorities is the wellbeing of, and respect for the dignity of, Special Olympics athletes\*. The purpose of this document is to make clear the Special Olympics policy on volunteers\* and staff dating Special Olympics athletes and to protect all participants in the Special Olympics movement, including athletes, coaches and staff, as well as Special Olympics organizations around the world.

Every Special Olympics Program must take all reasonable steps to ensure that athletes\* participating in Special Olympics do so in an environment that is free from abuse, intimidation, fear, pressure or coercion from any person in a position of authority, including Special Olympics staff, coaches, and other volunteers. At the same time, Special Olympics respects the right of every Special Olympics athlete to be treated with dignity and to have the same rights as every other human being.

#### **2.4a Policy**

Special Olympics prohibits any Special Olympics staff member or volunteer (excluding spouses of athletes and athletes who are Class C volunteers) from dating or having a sexual relationship with any Special Olympics athlete. In the event that a Special Olympics organization learns of any dating or sexual relationship, the organization immediately shall require either: i) that the staff member or volunteer end his or her association with Special Olympics; or ii) that the association between the staff member or volunteer and Special Olympics will be terminated.

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In the case of a Special Olympics athlete who is also a staff member or volunteer, the Chief Executive Officer of the organization where the athlete competes must evaluate the circumstances on a case-by-case basis and determine if an authority relationship exists between the staff/volunteer athlete and the competing athlete, and if it is determined that there is such a relationship, then apply the above policy in the same manner as the policy is applied to non-athlete staff or volunteers.

Each Special Olympics Program should determine whether it is required by its national or local laws to report certain relationships between Special Olympics staff or volunteers and Special Olympics athletes to the appropriate authorities under any “mandatory reporting” or other requirements in place for that Program’s jurisdiction, and comply with those requirements.

Special Olympics respects the right of athletes to have the full range of human relationships available to other human beings. This policy shall not be interpreted as a limitation on the rights of athletes, but only as a restriction on Special Olympics staff and volunteers.

\*The terms “Special Olympics athlete” and “athlete” refer to persons with intellectual disabilities. The term “volunteer” includes Unified Partners.

### 2.5 Penalties for Infractions of Policy

The penalties outlined below deal with violations of our Code of Conduct and/ or policies and situations in which the health, safety and well being of athletes, volunteers, staff or others may be at risk, whether or not a criminal charge has been made or could result. Penalties for actions that result in a criminal charge and/or conviction are addressed in Section 2.5 of this document.

Action taken will be predicated on a good faith belief that the disciplinary action is appropriate and corresponds to the seriousness of the infraction. Actions that may be taken include: **warning, probation, suspension, and/or expulsion** from the program.

#### Definitions

1. **Warning:** A cease and desist warning for perceived inappropriate behavior which, if ignored, could lead to a more severe course of disciplinary action. Decision to be made and notification to be given by supervising personnel.
2. **Probation:** A flexible, but defined period of time (which may contain temporary participation restrictions in an activity), during which the probationer must demonstrate the corrective behavior required. Decision to be made and notification to be given by supervising personnel.

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3. **Suspension:** A temporary period of time in which a person is barred from participation in Special Olympics Delaware. Decision to be made and notification to be given by the Executive Director of Special Olympics Delaware.
4. **Expulsion:** Permanent dismissal from Special Olympics Delaware. Decision to be made by the Board of Directors (or Executive Committee) and notification to be given by the Board Chair of Special Olympics Delaware.

The supervising individual may levy a **warning**, or **probation**, as appropriate.

The Executive Director has sole discretion to **suspend** an athlete/volunteer from SODE based upon available information and a determination that the conduct or, where appropriate, the alleged conduct, is so inherently harmful or egregious as to warrant immediate action, whether or not a criminal charge has been made or could result. The Executive Director will report the suspension to the President of the Board and will submit a report to the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors (or Executive Committee), has sole discretion to **expel** an athlete/volunteer from SODE. Action will be taken if the circumstances are so inherently harmful or egregious as to warrant expulsion, whether or not a criminal charge has been made or could result.

A suspension or expulsion may be appealed in writing to the Executive Director. The Board of Directors (or Executive Committee) will act on the appeal.

### 2.6 Behavior Resulting in a Misdemeanor or Felony Charge or Conviction

The section will be used as a guideline for disciplinary action when a criminal charge has been made against an individual who is registered with Special Olympics.

#### 2.6a Crimes Against Another Person

1. An athlete/volunteer **charged** with a crime against another person, **whether misdemeanor or felony**, shall be suspended from Special Olympics Delaware until the court has ruled on his or her guilt.
2. An athlete/volunteer **convicted** of a **misdemeanor crime** against another person may rejoin Special Olympics Delaware after completing the sentence handed down by the court (including the period of probation). However, if in the opinion of Special Olympics Delaware, the athlete/volunteer poses a threat to others, additional restrictions may be imposed pertaining to future participation, or he/she may be suspended or expelled.

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3. An athlete/volunteer **convicted** of a **felony crime** against another person shall be expelled from Special Olympics Delaware and may not rejoin.

### 2.6b Crimes **NOT** Against Another Person

1. An athlete/volunteer **charged** with a **misdemeanor crime** that is **not** against another person may remain in Special Olympics Delaware pending court action. However, an athlete/volunteer may be suspended if he/she constitutes a threat to the property or well being of others in the program.
2. An athlete/volunteer **convicted** of a **misdemeanor crime** that is **not** against another person may rejoin Special Olympics Delaware after meeting all court requirements. However, if in the opinion of Special Olympics Delaware, the athlete/volunteer poses a threat to the property or well being of others in the program, additional restrictions may be imposed pertaining to future participation, or he/she may be suspended or expelled.
3. An athlete/volunteer **charged** with a **felony crime** that is **not** against another person shall be suspended from Special Olympics Delaware pending court action.
4. An athlete/volunteer **convicted** of a **felony crime** that is **not** against another person shall be expelled from Special Olympics Delaware and may not rejoin.