

---

**GENERAL****SECTION A - MISSION**

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for people eight years of age and older with mental retardation\*, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

\*Wherever the phrase "mental retardation" appears in these Sports Rules, any Accredited Program which is located outside of the United States may substitute the phrase "mental handicap" for the phrase "mental retardation," if the phrase "mental handicap" is recognized by the national government in the nation where the Accredited Program is located. Use of any other terminology shall require SOI's prior written approval. The terms "mental retardation" and "mental handicap" are both used in these Sport Rules.

**SECTION B - GOAL OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS**

The ultimate goal of Special Olympics is to help persons with mental retardation participate as productive and respected members of society at large, by offering them a fair opportunity to develop and demonstrate their skills and talents through sports training and competition, and by increasing the public's awareness of their capabilities and needs.

**SECTION C - FOUNDING PRINCIPLES OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS**

The principles on which Special Olympics was founded, and which must continue to guide the operation and expansion of the global Special Olympics Movement, include the following:

1. People with mental retardation can, with proper instruction and encouragement, enjoy, learn and benefit from participation in individual and team sports, adapted as necessary to meet the needs of those with special mental and physical limitations.
2. Consistent training under the guidance of qualified coaches, with emphasis on physical conditioning, is essential to the development of sports skills, and competition among those of equal abilities is the most appropriate means of testing these skills, measuring progress and providing incentives for personal growth.
3. Through sports training and competition: people with mental retardation benefit physically, mentally, socially and spiritually; families are strengthened; and the community at large, both through participation and observation, is united with people with mental retardation in an environment of equality, respect and acceptance.
4. Every person with mental retardation who meets the eligibility requirements set out in the General Rules (see Article 6, Section 6.01) should have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the sports training and athletic competition programs offered by Special Olympics.
5. Special Olympics must transcend all boundaries of race, gender, religion, national origin, geography, and political philosophy, and offer sports training and competition opportunities to all eligible persons with mental retardation in accordance with uniform worldwide standards.
6. Special Olympics celebrates and strives to promote the spirit of sportsmanship and a love of participation in sports for its own sake. To that end, Special Olympics aims to provide every athlete with an opportunity to participate in training and competition events that challenge that athlete to his or her fullest potential, regardless of the athlete's level of ability. Special Olympics therefore requires that Special Olympics Games and Tournaments offer sports and events that are appropriate for athletes of all levels of ability, and in the case of team sports, provide every athlete with an opportunity to play in every game.
5. Special Olympics encourages sports training and competition opportunities at the local, area and community level (including schools) as a means of reaching the greatest number of eligible athletes.

**SECTION D - OPERATING POLICIES**

To provide the most enjoyable, beneficial and challenging activities for athletes with mental retardation, Special Olympics operates in accordance with the following operating policies. The General Rules and the Sports Rules are specifically designed to enforce these policies.

1. Special Olympics training and competition is open to every person with mental retardation who is at least eight years of age and who registers to participate in Special Olympics as required by the General Rules. There is no maximum age limitation for participation in Special Olympics. An Accredited Program may permit children who are at least six years old to participate in age-appropriate Special Olympics training programs offered by that Accredited Program, or in specific (and age-appropriate) cultural or social activities offered during the course of a Special Olympics event. Such children may be recognized for their participation in such training or other non-competition activities through certificates of participation, or through other types of recognition approved by SOI that are not associated with participation in Special Olympics competition. However, no child may participate in a Special Olympics competition (or be awarded medals or ribbons associated with competition) before his or her eighth birthday.
2. Special Olympics must offer full participation for every athlete regardless of his/her economic circumstances.
3. Special Olympics is an athlete-centered movement and believes that the athlete is all-important. Promoting athletes as the central focus of each training or competition program or event, developing the physical, social, psychological, intellectual and spiritual qualities of the participants, and providing meaningful opportunities to participate in additional activities that support Special Olympics programming must be the focus of every Accredited Program.
4. Special Olympics encourages coaches and family members of athletes to make every effort to encourage Special Olympics athletes to reach their highest level of athletic achievement in a particular sport and to provide opportunities for them to do so.
5. Each Accredited Program shall offer comprehensive year-round sports training, conducted by qualified coaches in accordance with these Sports Rules. Every Special Olympics athlete who competes in a Special Olympics sport at a Games or a Tournament must have been trained in that sport. Training shall include physical conditioning and nutrition education. Accredited Programs shall establish written minimum training requirements for competitors in each Official Sport, in accordance with their respective Accreditation Criteria and these Sports Rules. Athletes who desire to compete in Regional Games, U.S. Multi-State Games or World Games must be trained for at least eight (8) consecutive weeks in the appropriate sport and must have several opportunities to compete (including scrimmages and practice sessions) during that period. Each Accredited Program should offer athletes who are preparing for competitions at other levels within Special Olympics, such as for National Games, U.S. Program Games or Sub-Program Games (e.g. local, area, community), the same training and competition opportunities as are offered by that Accredited Program to athletes who participate in Regional, U.S. Multi-State and/or World Games.
6. Every Accredited Program must offer a variety of sports events and activities that are appropriate to the age and ability of each athlete and consistent with the Program's Accreditation Level and that foster full participation by each eligible athlete regardless of level of ability, degree of mental or physical disability, or economic circumstances.
7. Every Program must, if required by its Accreditation Level, include Special Olympics Unified Sports® training and competition in which individuals with and without mental retardation participate together on teams, and the Motor Activities Training Program for individuals with such severe mental retardation that they cannot benefit from standard Special Olympics training and competition Programs.
8. Special Olympics encourages qualified athletes to participate in school, club and community programs where they can train and compete in regular sports activities. The athletes may, at this point, wish to leave Special Olympics or continue to take part in Special Olympics activities as well. The decision rests with the athlete.
9. Special Olympics fully supports the concept of developing sports events for athletes with mental retardation in conjunction with events conducted by sports organizations for individuals without mental retardation. Accredited Programs should encourage other amateur and professional sports programs to include demonstrations by Special Olympics athletes as part of their major events. In addition, Accredited Programs should work with other sports organizations to develop sports events in which Special Olympics athletes may compete with individuals who do not have mental retardation, under circumstances that offer Special Olympics

---

**GENERAL**

athletes realistic opportunities to excel and compete successfully, whether by participating in the same heats as all athletes or in heats organized specifically for Special Olympics athletes. Special Olympics personnel should work to create a feasible format for these integrated activities.

10. All Special Olympics sports training and competition activities and events shall be conducted in accordance with the General Rules, these Sports Rules, and the other Uniform Standards. Each Accredited Program shall offer sports training and competition programs that meet the highest possible standards in facilities and equipment, athletic attire, training, coaching, officiating, administration, and related events for athletes and their families. Special Olympics sports training and competitions must be held in a manner that protects the participating athletes, provides fair and equitable conditions of competition, and promotes uniformity in testing athletic skills, so that no competitor obtains an unfair advantage over another.
11. Special Olympics believes that every athlete deserves an equal chance to excel during competition. Thus, each competition division within a given event must be structured so that every athlete/team in the division has a reasonable chance to excel during competition. This must be done by placing athletes/teams in divisions according to accurate records of previous performance or trial heats and, when relevant, grouping by age and gender.
12. Special Olympics seeks to promote the spirit of sportsmanship and a love of participation for its own sake by stressing and celebrating the importance of, and personal achievement associated with, each athlete's participation and personal effort in Special Olympics, regardless of comparative ability. Special Olympics believes that every athlete should participate to his/her fullest potential. This means that in team sports each coach must see to it that each athlete has frequent opportunities to participate. This also means that each Games and Tournament should offer as many sports as possible, with events for athletes of all ability levels. Special Olympics promotes this philosophy in the training of its coaches and officials.
13. All Special Olympics Games and competitions — at the local, state, provincial, national and international levels — shall reflect the values, standards, traditions, ceremonies, and activities embodied in the ancient and modern Olympic movement, broadened and enriched to celebrate the physical and spiritual qualities of persons with mental retardation so as to enhance their dignity and self-esteem.
14. At National and U.S. Program competitions, Regional Games, World Games, and other Special Olympics Games, official medals shall be presented to first, second, and third place winners. Athletes in fourth through eighth place shall receive ribbons with all appropriate ceremonies. Those who are disqualified (for reasons other than unsportsmanlike conduct or violations of the divisioning rules) or do not finish an event shall be given a participation ribbon. For competitions below the Accredited Program level (i.e. at the Area level), ribbons or a combination of medals and ribbons may be awarded.
15. Special Olympics training and competition activities must take place in public, with every effort made to attract spectators and generate coverage by the news media, in order to increase public awareness or and support for the need and capabilities of persons with mental retardation.
16. Special Olympics shall offer every athlete multiple opportunities annually to participate in locally based competitions in Official Sports and Nationally Popular Sports in which he/she is interested. These activities should include competitions with teams or individuals other than those with whom the athlete usually trains. Each Accredited Program must offer competition opportunities in at least the number of Official Sports and/or Nationally Popular Sports required by the Accreditation Criteria for that Program's Accreditation Level. In addition, in order to give athletes broader opportunities, area, state, provincial, regional, national and international competitions as well as tournaments shall, subject to available resources, be open to athletes representing the full range of skill levels.
17. Special Olympics is not designed to train elite athletes exclusively, but does provide training and competition for highly skilled and elite athletes with mental retardation. Fair and equitable methods shall be used to select athletes for participation in non-local competitions so that every athlete, regardless of skill level, has an equal opportunity to participate in each competition at his/her skill level.
18. Although Special Olympics is a sports training and competition movement, Accredited Programs may offer or cooperate with others who offer, as an adjunct to or integral part of Special Olympics Games, a full range of artistic, social and cultural experiences such

---

**GENERAL**

as dances, art exhibits, concerts, visits to historic sites, clinics, theatrical and motion picture performances and similar activities.

19. In some countries with newly created Special Olympics Programs it may not be possible, due to economic or other circumstances, to organize nationwide games. In such case, SOI may authorize such Programs to focus on area or regional games with the goal of increasing public awareness of the capabilities of individuals with mental retardation.
20. All Special Olympics training and competition must be conducted under the auspices of an organization specifically accredited and sanctioned by SOI to conduct Special Olympics Programs.
21. To the greatest extent possible, Special Olympics activities should be organized by and involve local volunteers, from school and college age individuals to senior citizens, from civic clubs to businesses, in order to create greater opportunities for public understanding of and participation with people with mental retardation.
22. The families of Special Olympics athletes are encouraged to play an active role in their community Special Olympics Program, to share in the training of their athletes, and to assist in the public education effort needed to create greater understanding of the purposes of Special Olympics and of the emotional, physical, social and spiritual needs of people with mental retardation and their families.
23. Special Olympics recognizes the contributions and encourages the participation of other organizations such as schools, parks and recreation departments, institutions caring for the mentally handicapped and independent living centers, which conduct sports training for individuals with mental retardation. Accredited Special Olympics Programs should encourage such organizations to train athletes in accordance with Special Olympics rules to facilitate the athletes' participation in Special Olympics competitions.

**SECTION E - STATEMENT OF PARTICIPATION**

Special Olympics seeks to uphold the spirit of sportsmanship and love of participation for their own sake. Special Olympics in its training of coaches and officials believes in the philosophy that every athlete should participate in events that challenge that athlete's ability level and to his or her fullest potential. This means that in team sports each coach must offer every athlete the opportunity to play in each game. To the Games and Competitions Directors, this means that each Games and Tournament should offer as many sports as practical and events for all levels of the athletes eligible for Special Olympics.

**SECTION F - OFFICIAL LANGUAGE STATEMENT**

The official language to be used in all communications between and among SOI and all GOC's and all Accredited Programs shall be English. Each Accredited Program shall be responsible for translating and distributing printed materials concerning that Accredited Program's conduct of Special Olympics programs into the most predominant language(s) spoken in that Accredited Program's country, in order to facilitate public education and to increase the number of athletes who participate in Special Olympics. If there is any conflict between the translation of any Uniform Standards or Program Materials and the English version, the English version shall take precedence.

**SECTION G - ADHERENCE TO OFFICIAL SPECIAL OLYMPICS SPORTS RULES**

All Special Olympics competitions shall be conducted in accordance with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules, which are designed to protect the athletes, provide fair and equitable conditions of competition, and promote uniformity so that no competitor shall obtain unfair advantage over another.

---

**GENERAL****SECTION H - SPORTS RULES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

1. **Purpose.** The purpose of the Sports Rules Advisory Committee is to conduct an on-going review of the Sports Rules and make recommendations to SOI concerning amendments to the Sports Rules proposed by the Committee and/or by Accredited Programs.
2. **Composition.** The Sports Rules Advisory Committee shall consist of members who are sports experts, coaches, parents, athletes, officials, Executive/National Directors of Accredited Programs or members of SOI's Board. Committee members shall be drawn from Accredited Programs throughout the world and shall be as geographically diverse and international in scope as is reasonably practicable. SOI's Board shall determine the size of the Sports Rules Advisory Committee.
3. **Selection and Terms of Members.** SOI shall appoint all members of the Sports Rules Advisory Committee. These appointments shall be made by SOI's Chief Executive Officer or his/her designee. In making these appointments, SOI may consider recommendations from Accredited Programs or from other persons who participate in or are affiliated with Special Olympics. Each member of the Sports Rules Advisory Committee shall serve for a term of four (4) years. SOI's Chief Executive Officer will appoint a replacement for any Committee member who is unable or unwilling to complete his/her four-year term.
4. **Staff.** The Sports and Competition Department of SOI is responsible for providing staff support to the Sports Rules Advisory Committee and Subcommittees.
5. **Chair and Vice Chair.** A Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, serving during the same rotation period, shall each be elected for a two year term. The Chairperson of the Sports Rules Advisory Committee shall receive all proposals relating to the Sports Rules; he or she shall be responsible for initiating all committee action on all proposals; and he or she shall prepare the Annual Sports Rules Advisory Committee Summary Report.

**SECTION I - SPECIAL OLYMPICS SPORTS RULES SUBCOMMITTEES**

1. The Sports Rules Advisory Committee shall form and maintain standing subcommittees for reviewing the rules concerning specific Official Sports and Nationally Popular Sports. There shall be a Sports Rules Subcommittee for each Official Sport and each Nationally Popular Sport. The members of each Sports Rules Subcommittee shall be appointed by SOI's Chief Executive Officer. Subcommittee members shall be appointed to four-year terms and shall serve at the pleasure of SOI's Chief Executive Officer. There will be seven individuals on each Subcommittee and individuals may be nominated at any time by Accredited Programs and other participants in Special Olympics, including members of Advisory Committees to assure that all Subcommittee positions are always filled with qualified members.
2. Each Subcommittee shall report its recommendations to the Sports Rules Committee as described in Article I, Section K.
3. The following shall be the major responsibilities for Subcommittee members pertaining to a specific sport:
  - a. Reviewing all proposed rule changes.
  - b. Providing input and guidance to the Subcommittee regarding proposed rules changes.
  - c. Acquiring an understanding of Special Olympics and National Governing Bodies' rules.
  - d. Keeping in close contact with Accredited Programs staff and volunteers to assure recommendations from the field are heard.
  - e. Working with other Subcommittee members to formulate recommendations to the Sports Rules Committee.
  - f. Assuring that the basic philosophy of Special Olympics is kept in mind concerning all sports rules.

**GENERAL****SECTION J - PROCEDURES FOR ADOPTING SPECIAL OLYMPICS SPORTS RULES, AMENDMENTS, MODIFICATIONS, AND DEFINITIONS**

1. Anyone within the Special Olympics Movement may submit proposals to the Sports Rules Committee regarding new rules, amendments, modifications, or deletions to the Sports Rules.
2. A proposal for a new rule, amendment, modification, or deletion to the Sports Rules may be submitted in writing at any time to the Chairperson of the Sports Rules Committee, using the Official Proposed Amendments, Modifications, and Deletions Form (See Appendix B). However, written proposals must be received by September 1 in order to be considered for inclusion in the June 1 Final Report of the following year. All written proposals shall be dealt with in accordance with the timetable in Section K.
3. If the proposal is of an emergency nature, the Sports Rules Committee shall make its recommendation to the Chairman of the Board of Directors of SOI within 10 days after reviewing the proposed rule, amendment, modification, or deletion. When making a proposal of an emergency nature, it should be so stated in the proposal.
4. Program Directors shall be notified of the SOI Board of Directors' action on the Sports Rules Committee Final Report.
5. All new rules, amendments, modifications, or deletions to the Sports Rules shall become effective in the year following their adoption by the SOI Board of Directors.

**SECTION K - TIMETABLE**

1. The following shall be the timetable for the Sports Rules Committee and Subcommittees:

June 1st:	Deadline for submitting proposed changes in the Sports Rules to the Sports Rules Committee. These will be considered by the Sports Rules Subcommittees.
June 15th:	Chairman of the Sports Rules Committee distributes all proposals for changes to the Sports Rules to the appropriate Sports Rules Subcommittees.
July 15th:	Chairman of each Sports Rules Subcommittee submits reports of recommendations concerning proposed changes to the Sports Rules Committee.
July 22nd:	Chairman of the Sports Rules Committee distributes all proposals for changes to the Sports Rules to the Sports Rules Committee.
June 1st:	Appointments made to the Sports Rules Advisory Committee and Sports Rules Subcommittees. Updated listing with names and addresses distributed to Accredited Programs.
July 15th-August 15th	Meeting of the Sports Rules Advisory Committee, to consider the recommendations made by the Sports Rules Subcommittees and any Article I items.
December 1st:	Annual revisions to Special Olympics Sports Rules available online and on CD.
December 31st:	Annual revisions to Special Olympics Rules available in publication form,

2. Following is the timetable for publication of the Winter Sports Rules:

- a. The revised Winter Sports Rules Book will be published every four years beginning in 2003 along with the Summer Sports as one Special Olympics Sports Rules Book. Following is the publication timetable.

The Sports Rules Advisory Committee will review recommendations for change each year following the schedule above. If changes are approved during that process, addendums to the rules will be published on the following schedule.

December 2003  
December 2004

---

**GENERAL**

December 2005

December 2006

3. Following is the timetable for publication of the Summer Sports Rules Section of the combined Summer/Winter Sports Rules Book:

- a. The revised Summer Sports Rules Book will be published every four years beginning in 2004 along with the Winter Sports as one Special Olympics Sports Rules Book. Following is the publication timetable.

The Sports Rules Advisory Committee will review recommendations for change each year following the schedule above. If changes are approved during that process, addendums to the rules will be published on the following schedule.

December 2004

December 2005

December 2006

December 2007

**SECTION L - ELIGIBILITY FOR PARTICIPATION IN SPECIAL OLYMPICS**

1. **General Statement of Eligibility.** Special Olympics training and competition is open to every person with mental retardation who is at least eight years of age and who registers to participate in Special Olympics as required by the General Rules.
2. **Age Requirements.** There is no maximum age limitation for participation in Special Olympics. The minimum age requirement for participation in Special Olympics competition is eight years of age. An Accredited Program may permit children who are at least six years old to participate in age-appropriate Special Olympics training programs offered by that Accredited Program, or in specific (and age-appropriate) cultural or social activities offered during the course of a Special Olympics event. Such children may be recognized for their participation in such training or other non-competition activities through certificates of participation, or through other types of recognition approved by SOI which are not associated with participation in Special Olympics competition. However, no child may participate in a Special Olympics competition (or be awarded medals or ribbons associated with competition) before his or her eighth birthday.
3. **Degree of Disability.** Participation in Special Olympics training and competition is open to all persons with mental retardation who meet the age requirements, regardless of the level or degree of that person's disability, and whether or not that person also has other mental or physical disabilities, so long as that person registers to participate in Special Olympics as required by the General Rules.
4. **Identifying Persons with Mental Retardation.** A person is considered to have mental retardation for purposes of determining his or her eligibility to participate in Special Olympics if that person satisfies any one of the following requirements:
  - a. The person has been identified by an agency or professional as having mental retardation as determined by their localities; or
  - b. The person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures such as intelligent quotient or "IQ" testing or other measures that are generally accepted within the professional community in that Accredited Program's nation as being a reliable measurement of the existence of a cognitive delay; or
  - c. The person has a closely related developmental disability. A "closely related developmental disability" means having functional limitations in both general learning (such as IQ) and in adaptive skills (such as in 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 Olympics athletes, but may be eligible to volunteer.
5. **Preserving Flexibility in Identifying Eligible Athletes.** An Accredited Program may request limited permission from SOI to depart from the eligibility requirements specified above if the Accredited Program believes that there are exceptional circumstances that

---

**GENERAL**

warrant such a departure and so notifies SOI in writing. SOI will consider such requests promptly, but shall have the final authority to determine whether any departure or exception is appropriate.

6. **Multiple Handicaps.** Persons who have multiple handicaps may participate in Special Olympics provided they are eligible under this Section L.
7. **Registration of Athletes.**
  - a. **Required Procedures.** All persons who are eligible to participate in Special Olympics training and/or competition programs must register to participate with their local Accredited Program as required by this Subsection 7 before being allowed by that Accredited Program to participate in any Special Olympics training and/or competition activities. Athletes are to be registered through SOI's Participant Tracking System. The policies, procedures, registration forms and materials used by all Accredited Programs for registering Special Olympics athletes shall in all cases be subject to SOI's approval. No registration forms or materials other than those authorized by these Sports Rules may be used by Accredited Programs to register athletes without SOI's prior written authorization. Registration as a Special Olympics athlete requires:
    - 1) Submission of a completed Participant Tracking System Form for each athlete that contains registration information, medical information, and a medical certification;
    - 2) Submission of a completed Athlete Release Form, which contains a release to be signed by an adult athlete or by the parent/guardian of a minor athlete concerning medical matters and permissions concerning publicity;
    - 3) If applicable, a special release form for athletes or parents having religious objections to the provisions in the Athlete Release Form concerning authorization for emergency medical treatment; and
    - 4) If applicable, a special release form for athletes or parents concerning the potential risks of Atlanto-axial instability in athletes with Down syndrome.
  - b. **Athlete Registration Form.** Eligible persons desiring to register as Special Olympics athletes must complete and submit to the Accredited Program a standardized application for participation in Special Olympics, which outlines the athlete's identifying information and medical background, and contains a physician's report and certification concerning the results of the initial physical examination required below. The standardized applications used by Accredited Programs to register Special Olympics athletes are subject to SOI's approval, and must conform to the form entitled "Application for Participation in Special Olympics," or any supplement or amendment to that form approved by SOI. Accredited Programs may create their own forms for the Athlete Registration Form for use within their respective jurisdictions, but only if all the content prescribed by the SOI-approved form is included in the form used by the Accredited Program, and no material may be added to that form that is inconsistent with the General Rules or the other Uniform Standards.
  - c. **Athlete Release Form.** A properly signed standardized release must be submitted to the Accredited Program on behalf of every athlete as part of the athlete registration process. The standardized release shall grant the appropriate Special Olympics entities (e.g., the Accredited Program, SOI, a GOC, etc.) permission to make certain limited uses of an athlete's name and likeness, acknowledge the potential impact on an athlete with Down syndrome of participating in certain sports, and authorize the appropriate Special Olympics entities (e.g., the Accredited Program, SOI, a GOC, etc.) to make arrangements for emergency medical treatment when necessary. The content and format of the release shall be subject to SOI's approval, and must conform to the release form entitled "Official Special Olympics Release Form," and any supplement or amendment to that form, approved by SOI ("Athlete Release Form"). In order to ensure uniformity in the content of the releases that Special Olympics athletes or their parents are asked to sign, all Accredited Programs must use the SOI-prescribed Athlete Release Form unless otherwise authorized in writing by SOI. The Athlete Release Form must be signed by an adult athlete or by the parent or guardian of any athlete who is legally a minor.
  - d. **Religious Objections.** The Athlete Release Form requires that the appropriate Special Olympics entities (e.g., the Accredited Program, SOI, a GOC, etc.) be given permission to arrange for emergency medical treatment for an athlete if

---

**GENERAL**

a medical emergency arises during the athlete's participation in Special Olympics and neither the athlete nor his/her parent or guardian is able or available to consent to emergency treatment. If, however, any athletes or the parents of minor athletes have religious objections to granting such permission, the Accredited Program may permit such athletes or parents to delete or strike out the provisions of the Athlete Release Form that contain the authorization for emergency medical treatment (but not any other provisions of the Athlete Release Form). In place of those stricken provisions, such athletes or parents shall sign and submit a separate release form addressing how medical emergencies are to be handled (the "Special Emergency Treatment Release"). The content and format of a Special Emergency Treatment Release shall be subject to SOI's approval. Unless otherwise authorized in writing by SOI, the Special Emergency Treatment Release form used by all Accredited Programs must conform to the form entitled, "Special Provisions Regarding Medical Treatment for Athletes Having Religious Objections to Standard Form," and any supplement or amendment to that form, approved by SOI. The Special Emergency Treatment Release must be signed by an adult athlete or by the parent or guardian of an athlete who is legally a minor.

e. **Physical Examination Requirements.**

- 1) Examination Required as Part of Initial Registration. All athletes seeking to register for participation in Special Olympics for the first time must be examined before that registration by a physician or trained medical professional who is not a physician but who is authorized or licensed under the laws of the Accredited Program's jurisdiction to perform medical examinations and make medical diagnoses (collectively, a "Licensed Medical Professional"), and have that Licensed Medical Professional complete the "medical certification" section of the Athlete Registration Form.
- 2) Subsequent Medical Examinations Required by an Accredited Program. An athlete who completes the initial registration process for participation in Special Olympics and who then continues that participation over a period of more than one year shall be required by the relevant Accredited Program to seek follow-up medical advice before continuing his/her Special Olympics participation if that Accredited Program has a reasonable basis for believing that there has been a significant change in the athlete's health since the initial medical examination and certification were completed. In addition, an Accredited Program's Board of Directors/National Committee may impose more stringent requirements on the athletes registered by that Accredited Program concerning the frequency of required medical examinations than those which are imposed by subsection (1) above. However, no Accredited Program may dispense with the requirement that each athlete be examined at least once by a Licensed Medical Professional as part of his/her initial registration with Special Olympics.
- 3) Procedures and Forms Used by Accredited Programs. Accredited Programs shall develop procedures and use standardized forms for confirming that all registered athletes have obtained the required medical examination and for obtaining reports from health professionals concerning the results of any examinations occurring after the initial examination required for registration (with those initial results being reported in the "medical certification" section of the Athlete Registration Form). All such procedures and forms shall be subject to SOI's ongoing review and approval.
- 4) Procedures for Regional and World Games. Every athlete participating in Regional Games, Regional U.S. Games and/or World Games shall establish that he/she has been examined by a Licensed Medical Professional within the one (1) year that immediately precedes the starting date for those Games. SOI or the appropriate GOC responsible for the Games in question will provide Accredited Programs with approved medical reporting forms for this purpose.

- f. **Participation by Individuals with Down Syndrome Who Have Atlanto-axial Instability.** In light of medical research indicating that up to 15% of individuals with Down syndrome have a mal-alignment of the cervical vertebrae C-1 and C-2 in the neck known as Atlanto-axial instability, exposing them to possible injury if they participate in activities that hyper-extend or radically flex the neck or upper spine, all Accredited Programs must take the following precautions before permitting athletes with Down syndrome to participate in certain physical activities:

---

**GENERAL**

- 1) Athletes with Down syndrome may participate in most Special Olympics sports training and competition, but shall not be permitted to participate in any activities which, by their nature, result in hyper-extension, radical flexion or direct pressure on the neck or upper spine, unless the requirements of subsections (2) and (3) below are satisfied. Such sports training and competition activities include: butterfly stroke and diving starts in swimming, diving, pentathlon, high jump, squat lifts, equestrian sports, artistic gymnastics, football (soccer), alpine skiing and any warm-up exercise placing undue stress on the head and neck.
  - 2) An athlete with Down syndrome may be permitted to participate in the activities described in subsection (1) above if that athlete is examined (including x-ray views of full extension and flexion of neck) by a physician who has been briefed on the nature of the Atlanto-axial instability condition, and who determines, based on the results of that examination, that the athlete does not have an Atlanto-axial instability condition.
  - 3) An athlete with Down syndrome who has been diagnosed by a physician as having an Atlanto-axial instability condition may nevertheless be permitted to participate in the activities described in subsection (1) above if the athlete, or the parent or guardian of a minor athlete, confirms in writing his or her decision to proceed with these activities notwithstanding the risks created by the Atlanto-axial instability, and two (2) Licensed Medical Professionals certify in writing that they have explained these risks to the athlete and his/her parent or guardian, and that the athlete's condition does not, in their judgment, preclude the athlete from participating in Special Olympics. These statements and certifications shall be documented and provided to Accredited Programs using the standardized form approved by SOI, entitled "Special Release for Athletes with Atlanto-axial Instability," and any revisions of that form, approved by SOI (the "Special Release Concerning Atlanto-axial Instability").
- g. **Participation in Special Olympics Unified Sports®.** Persons who are eligible to participate in Special Olympics Unified Sports® as a Special Olympics Unified Sports® Partner shall be required by Accredited Programs that offer Special Olympics Unified Sports® to complete and sign a standardized application and release form approved by SOI, which shall conform to the application and release form entitled "Application for Participation in Special Olympics by a Special Olympics Unified Sports® Partner" (or any amendment or supplement to that form approved by SOI. The Special Olympics Unified Sports® Partner Release Form shall be signed by every Special Olympics Unified Sports® Partner who is an adult, or by his or her parent or guardian if that athlete is a minor.
- h. **Submission of Required Forms.** Accredited Programs are obligated to ensure that all application and registration materials, including if applicable, medical reports and certifications, required by this Section 7 are properly completed and submitted by each athlete, or by his/her parent or guardian, before permitting that athlete to participate in any Special Olympics training or competition.
8. **Participation by Persons Who are Blood-Borne Contagious Disease Carriers:** No Accredited Program or GOC may exclude or isolate from participation in any Special Olympics training or competition any athlete who is known to be a carrier of a blood-borne contagious infection or virus, or otherwise discriminate against such athletes solely because of that medical condition. In view of the risk that one or more Special Olympics athletes may have a blood-borne contagious infection or virus, in conducting Special Olympics training and competition events, Accredited Programs and GOC's shall follow so-called "Universal Precautions," or "Universal Blood and Body Fluid Precautions" for every exposure to any person's blood, saliva or other bodily fluid. SOI shall keep Accredited Programs apprised of the written Universal Precautions which meet the requirements of this Section.

**SECTION M - CLASSIFICATION OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS SPORTS**

1. There are two classifications of sports in Special Olympics:
  - a. Official Sport
  - b. Nationally Popular Sports

The sports in which Special Olympics athletes are given the opportunity to train and compete are divided into two general classes, consisting of the Official Sports and Nationally Popular Sports. SOI has the ultimate authority to determine how

---

**GENERAL**

and when to classify sports as either Official Sports or Nationally Popular Sports. Those sports currently on the Nationally Popular Sports list are included in the Special Olympics sports Rules Books.

**2. Official Sport.**

The SOI Board of Directors has the exclusive authority to designate those sports that are Official Sports. Such sports shall, at a minimum, meet the following requirements:

- a. There must be a recognized International Sports Federation that maintains the current rules for that sport and SOI must have a copy of those rules. There must be a commitment from that Federation to assist SOI in conducting the training of coaches, officials, and athletes.
- b. A Sports Rules Subcommittee must be in place.
- c. A presentation on the sport must have been made to and accepted by the Sports Rules Advisory Committee.
- d. At least 12 Accredited Programs shall have included the sport in their National Games or tournaments as a Nationally Popular Sport for two (2) consecutive Games before being accepted as an Official Sport.
- e. An up-to-date Sports Skills Instructional Guide must be available for use in conducting training.
- f. Approval for acceptance as an Official Sport has been granted by the SOI Board of Directors.

**3. Nationally Popular Sport.**

"Nationally Popular Sports" are sports that are not classified by SOI as Official Sports, but that SOI authorizes for inclusion in Special Olympics sports training and competition programs. SOI classifies various sports as "Nationally Popular Sports" based on criteria and procedures set forth below:

- a. A formal proposal for training and competition in the sport has been submitted to the SOI Worldwide Games and Competition Department by an Accredited Program or a GOC.
- b. The Medical Advisory Committee has reviewed the sport to determine if it meets the health and safety standards of SOI.
- c. There is evidence of interest in the sport by groups of Special Olympics coaches, individuals with mental retardation, and schools, agencies, family groups, etc. involved with potential Special Olympics athletes.
- d. A Sport Advisory Committee has been established for the sport and has developed Special Olympics rules in order for competition to be conducted.
- e. The addition of the sport will enhance the year-round aspect of sports training and competition that is fundamental to Special Olympics and provide meaningful opportunities for persons with mental retardation, including age appropriate activities, activities for lower ability athletes, etc.

**4. Prohibited Sport.**

- a. "Prohibited Sports" means those sports that SOI has determined, in consultation with the Medical Advisory Committee, do not meet SOI's minimum health or safety standards or that would otherwise expose Special Olympics athletes to unreasonable risks to their health or safety. No Accredited Program may offer any training or competition activities in any sport that SOI has classified as a Prohibited Sport. SOI has presently classified boxing, fencing, shooting, karate, and other martial arts as Prohibited Sports.

**5. Maintenance of a Sport at a Specific Level of Recognition.**

- a. The SOI Sports Advisor for each Official and Nationally Popular sport shall be responsible for submitting evidence for maintenance at the current level of recognition.
- b. Sports at both levels, Official and Nationally Popular, will be required to re-certify within 12 months of the last Special Olympics World Games (every four years).

**GENERAL****6. The re-certification application will be made to the Sports Rules Committee.****SECTION N - USE OF INTERNATIONAL SPORTS FEDERATION AND NATIONAL SPORTS GOVERNING BODY RULES**

1. The Sports Rules shall govern all Special Olympics sports competitions. As an international sports movement, Special Olympics has created these rules based upon rules from International Sports Federations and National Governing Bodies. International Sports Federations and National Governing Body rules shall be employed except when they are in conflict with the Sports Rules. In such cases, the Sports Rules shall apply.
2. International Sports Federations govern their respective sports worldwide. The International Sports Federations' members are national organizations that govern sports within a particular country. These organizations are called National Governing Bodies of Sports. The International Sports Federations have jurisdiction over sanctioning and organizing competitions in their respective sports. The International Sports Federations are specifically delegated by the International Olympic Committee the responsibility of handling the technical aspects of their sports at Summer and Winter Olympic Games. The International Sports Federations delegate to the National Governing Bodies the responsibility of overseeing the conduct and the development of their sports at the national level.
3. Accredited Programs should use the sports rules of the International Sports Federations, except when those rules conflict with the Sports Rules (e.g., awards, divisions, eligibility, and modifications). The Accredited Programs may use the sports rules of the National Governing Bodies of their respective countries instead of the rules of the International Sports Federations. It should be noted that some National Governing Bodies may make modifications to the International Sports Federations' Rules. At Special Olympics World Games, the International Sports Federations' Rules shall be used.
4. The following list sets forth the International Sports Federations whose rules provide the basis for the rules of each Special Olympics Official Sport. National Governing Bodies are responsible for the dissemination of rules defining the conduct of competition and materials relating to the development of the various sports within each nation. Thus, rules of both the International Sports Federation and of the National Governing Body may be obtained from a National Governing Body.

**Special Olympics****Summer Games Sports****International Sports Federations**

Aquatics	Federation Internationale de Natacion Amateur (FINA)
Swimming	Avenue de Beaumont 9
Diving	Rez-de-Chaussee 1012 Lausanne, Switzerland Telephone: (41-21) 312-6602 Fax: (41-21) 312-6610
Athletics (Track & Field)	International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) 17, Rue Princesse-Florestine BP 359 Monte Carlo 98007, Monaco Cedex Telephone: (377) 93-10-8888 Fax: (377) 93-15-9515 Internet: <a href="http://www.iaaf.org">www.iaaf.org</a>
Basketball	Federation Internationale de Basketball (FIBA) P.O. Box 700607 81306 Munich Allemagne, Germany Tel: (49-89) 74-81580

---

**GENERAL**

	Fax: (49-89) 74-815833 Internet: <a href="http://www.fiba.com">www.fiba.com</a>
Bowling	Federation Internationale des Quilleurs (FIQ) 1631 Mesa Ave., Ste. A Colorado Springs, CO, 80904-2921 USA Telephone: 1 (719) 636-2695 Fax: 1 (719) 636-3300
Cycling	Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) Casa Postale 1000 Lausanne 23 Switzerland Telephone: (41-21) 622-0580 Fax: (41-21) 622-0588 Internet: <a href="http://www.uci.ch">www.uci.ch</a> e-mail: <a href="mailto:admin@uci.ch">admin@uci.ch</a>
Equestrian	Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI) Avenue Mon-Repos 24 Casa Postale 157 1000 Lausanne 5, Switzerland Telephone: (41.21) 312-5656 Fax: (41-21) 312-8677
Football (Soccer)	Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) Hitzigweg 11 Case Postale 85 8030 Zurich, Switzerland Telephone: (41-1) 384-9595 Fax: (41-1) 384-9696 Internet: <a href="http://www.fifa.com">www.fifa.com</a>
Golf	Royal Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrew's United Kingdom KY169JD Telephone: 44-33-47-2112 Fax: 44-33-47-7580
Gymnastics	Federation Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG) Rue des Oeuches 10 Case Postale 359 2740 Moutier 1, Switzerland Telephone: (41-32) 494-6410 Fax: (41-32) 494-6419 Internet: <a href="http://www.worldsport.com/sports/gymnastics/home.html">www.worldsport.com/sports/gymnastics/home.html</a>
Powerlifting	International Powerlifting Federation (IPF) Zeisigstrasse 34

---

**GENERAL**

	<p>Vaterstetten Germany Telephone: 49-810631675 Fax: 49-810634605</p>
Roller Skating	<p>Federation Internationale de Roller Skating (FIRS) Rambla Catalunya 80, piso 1 08008 Barcelona, Spain Telephone: (34-3) 487-5348 or 487-5593 Fax: (34-3) 487-6916 e-mail: <a href="mailto:firs@idgrup.iber.net">firs@idgrup.iber.net</a></p>
Sailing	<p>International Sailing Federation (ISAF) 27 Broadwall Waterloo, London SE1 9PL, Great Britain Telephone: (44-71) 928-6611 Fax: (44-71) 401-8304 Internet: <a href="http://www.sailing.org">www.sailing.org</a> e-mail: <a href="mailto:100574.3126@compuserve.com">100574.3126@compuserve.com</a></p>
Softball	<p>Federation Internationale de Softball (ISF) 2801 N.E. 50th Street Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73111 USA Telephone (405) 424-5266 Fax: (405) 424-5700 e-mail: <a href="mailto:isfsoftbal@aol.com">isfsoftbal@aol.com</a></p>
Tennis	<p>Federation Internationale de Tennis (ITF) Palliser Road, Barons Court London W14 9EN Great Britain Telephone: (44-171) 381-8060 Fax: (44-171) 381-3989 Internet: <a href="http://www.itftennis.com">www.itftennis.com</a></p>
Volleyball	<p>Federation Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) Case Postale 1001 Lausanne, Switzerland Telephone: (41-21) 320-8932 Fax: (41-21) 320-8865 Internet: <a href="http://www.fivb.ch">www.fivb.ch</a></p>
<b>Special Olympics Winter Games Sports</b>	<b>International Sports Federations</b>
Alpine Skiing	Federation Internationale de Ski (FIS)
Cross Country Skiing	<p>Blochstasse 2 3653 Oberhofen/Thunersee, Switzerland</p>

---

**GENERAL**

	<p>Telephone: (41-33) 44-6161          Fax: (41-33) 43-5353          Internet: <a href="http://www.fis.netica.net">www.fis.netica.net</a></p>
Figure Skating	<p>International Skating Union (ISU)          Chemin de Primrose 2          1007 Lausanne, Switzerland          Telephone (41-21) 612 66 66          Fax: (41-21) 612 66 77          Internet: <a href="http://www.isu.org">www.isu.org</a></p>
Floor Hockey	<p>Special Olympics, Inc.          (not an International Sports Federation)          1325 G Street, NW, Suite 500          Washington, DC 20005          Telephone: (202) 628-3630          Fax: (202) 824-0200</p>
Speed Skating	<p>International Skating Union (ISU)          Chemin de Primrose 2          1007 Lausanne, Switzerland          Telephone (41-21) 612 66 66          Fax: (41-21) 612 66 77          Internet: <a href="http://www.isu.org">www.isu.org</a></p>
<b>Special Olympics</b>	
<b>Nationally Popular Sports</b>	<b>International Sports Federations</b>
Badminton	<p>International Badminton Federation (IBF)          Manor Park Place          Rutherford Way          Cheltenham, Gloucestershire          GL51 9TU, Great Britain          Telephone: (44-1242) 23-4904          Fax: (44-1242) 22-1030          Internet: <a href="http://www.intbadfed.org">www.intbadfed.org</a></p>
Bocce	<p>International Bocce Association, Inc.          187 Proctor Blvd.          Utica, NY 13501 USA          Telephone: (315) 733-9611          Internet: <a href="http://www.borg.com/~iba">www.borg.com/~iba</a></p>
Table Tennis	<p>International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF)          53, London Road          St. Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex          TN37 6AY, Great Britain          Telephone: (44-1424) 72-1414          Fax: (44-1424) 43-1871</p>

**GENERAL**

Internet: [www.ittf.com](http://www.ittf.com)  
 e-mail: [hq@ittf.cablenet.co.uk](mailto:hq@ittf.cablenet.co.uk)

Team Handball                      Federation Internationale de Handball (IHF)  
    Case Postale 312  
    4020 Bale, Switzerland  
    Telephone: (41-61) 272-1300  
    Fax: (41-61) 272-1344  
    Internet: [www.worldsport.com/sports/handball/home.html](http://www.worldsport.com/sports/handball/home.html)

**SECTION O - SPECIAL OLYMPICS GAMES**

1. Special Olympics Games shall be conducted as Special Olympics Summer Games and Special Olympics Winter Games. Accredited Programs shall make every effort to offer as many Official Sports as possible at each Games, but in at least the number of Official Sports and/or Nationally Popular Sports required by the Accreditation Criteria that govern their respective Accreditation Levels.
  - a. Special Olympics Summer Games may include competition in the following Official Sports:
 

Aquatics (Swimming & Diving)	Golf
Athletics (Track & Field)	Gymnastics
Basketball	Powerlifting
Bowling	Roller-skating
Cycling	Softball
Equestrian Sports	Tennis
Football (Soccer)	Volleyball
  - b. Special Olympics Winter Games may include competition in the following Official Sports:
 

Alpine Skiing	Floor Hockey
Cross-Country Skiing	Speed Skating
Figure Skating	
2. The Special Olympics World Summer Games shall be held every four years starting with the 1975 World Summer Special Olympics Games.
3. The Special Olympics World Winter Games shall be held every four years starting with the 1977 World Winter Special Olympics Games.
4. Special Olympics National Games may be held annually.
5. Special Olympics Program, Provincial, Area, and Local Games shall be held annually.
6. Other Special Olympics competitions shall be defined as Special Olympics and the sport to be contested, e.g. Special Olympics Basketball Tournament, Special Olympics Aquatics Meet, etc.
7. Special Olympics competitions that include two or more sports (and are not a Summer or Winter Games) shall be defined as a Special Olympics Tournament.
8. Tournaments and Other Events. SOI shall approve the Nationally Popular Sports to be featured during any Tournaments, demonstrations or other sports training or competition events held on a multi-jurisdictional, regional or international level. The competitions in the one or two sports that constitute a Tournament shall be conducted in accordance with the Sports Rules for those particular sports.
9. The Special Olympics policy on fees is as follows:

---

**GENERAL**

- a. No Accredited Program or GOC may require Special Olympics athletes or their families to pay or promise to pay any type of admission, registration, training, participation, or competition fee, or any other fee or charge of any type as a condition for admission to any Special Olympics event or activity, or as a fee for the athlete's participation in any Special Olympics or competition (collectively, "Prohibited Fees"). Such payment, fees or charges would be in direct conflict with the goal of Special Olympics to provide every person with mental retardation with the opportunity to participate in sports training and competition, regardless of financial circumstances.
  - b. The preceding paragraph does not prohibit an Accredited Program from charging accreditation fees to its Sub-Programs to help defray the cost of administering those Sub-Programs in accordance with these General Rules, so long as the amount of any such accreditation fee is reasonable and is approved by SOI, and so long as the Sub-Program required to pay that fee does not charge or accept any Prohibited Fees from athletes or their families.
10. Each Accredited Program is solely responsible for raising adequate funding, through grants, donations, sponsorships and fund-raising projects, to pay for its own program and administrative operations.

**SECTION P - MEDICAL AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS**

1. Accredited Programs and GOC's must conduct all sports training and competition activities in a safe environment, taking all reasonable steps to protect the health and safety of athletes, coaches, volunteers and spectators, and must adhere to sport-specific medical and safety requirements as contained in the Sport Rules.
2. Accredited Programs shall provide for adequate supervision and coaching for all athletes. For all training and competition activities, a four-to-one (4:1) athlete-to-coach ratio shall be maintained.
3. In addition, Accredited Programs and GOC's must comply with the following minimum standards for medical facilities and safety precautions at the sites of competitions (in addition to the sport-specific requirements of the Sports Rules), unless SOI grants written authorization to a particular Accredited Program or GOC to depart from one or more of these requirements in a specific instance:
4. Minimum Medical Facilities at Large Competitions:
  - a. A qualified emergency medical technician must be in attendance or readily available at all times.
  - b. A Licensed Medical Professional must be on-site or on immediate call at all times during the competition.
  - c. All first aid areas must be clearly identified, adequately equipped, and staffed by a qualified emergency medical technician for the duration of the event.
  - d. An ambulance, resuscitator and other appropriate medical equipment, particularly equipment for handling seizures, must be readily available at all times.
5. Minimum Safety Precautions at Competitions:
  - a. Adequate precautions must be taken to avoid exposing athletes to sunburn, hypothermia, or other conditions or illnesses caused by exposure to the elements.
  - b. Special precautions must be taken when holding competitions at high altitudes, including providing training recommendations for athletes before the competition and equipping the competition venues with oxygen tanks.
  - c. Ample water or other liquids must be provided for athletes throughout the competition, and athletes should be encouraged to take appropriate water breaks.
  - d. Special precautions must be taken to insure that each participant receives any medications that have been prescribed for his/her use.
  - e. Competition organizers, officials and coaches must take into account the cardiovascular effect and level of strenuousness of a sport when setting the competition schedule for that sport, taking into account the length of competition, weather

**GENERAL**

conditions, the physical ability of the participants, and the need for adequate rest periods. In general, athletes should be given adequate time between trials, finals and competitions, and teams should be given adequate time between the end of one competition and the next round of competition.

- f. Protective eyewear is required for monocular athletes participating in dynamic reactive sports (e.g., basketball, volleyball, softball) and strongly recommended for athletes who wear street glasses and participate in these activities.
- g. Protective headgear must be worn by athletes when participating in the following sports: cycling, equestrian, floor hockey, softball (for batters and base runners), speed skating, and alpine skiing (for giant slalom and downhill event).

**SECTION Q - SPONSORS, NAMES OF EVENTS, CLOWNS AND CHARACTERS**

1. Identification of Sponsors. Corporate sponsors or other organizations that support Accredited Programs shall be recognized by Accredited Programs only as "sponsors," "providers," or "supporters" of the Accredited Program, or other similar terminology. Accredited Programs shall not permit such companies to include the name "Special Olympics," the name of the Accredited Program, or any other SO Mark in their own names or in the names of their products or services.
2. When a corporation or other organization provides financial support for a Special Olympics competition conducted by an Accredited Program (or by a Sub-Program), that corporation or organization may describe itself, and/or may be listed in signage, publicity and promotional materials, only as a "sponsor," "provider," or "supplier" of the Special Olympics event. To protect the ownership and integrity of the Special Olympics name and proprietary symbols, sponsors may never include their corporate, organization or product names in the title or name of the event itself. For example, if "Company" is the sponsor of an Accredited Program's Basketball Tournament, the event shall not be named or described as the "Company's Special Olympics Basketball Tournament." Accredited Programs are encouraged to contact SOI if they have questions about the appropriate billing and recognition to be given to the Program's event sponsors.
3. Name of Fund-Raising Events. Corporate sponsors or other organizational supporters of an Accredited Program that conduct their own promotional or fund-raising events for the benefit of the Accredited Program may identify their own events using their company or product names and may indicate that the events are "for the benefit of" the Accredited Program, but shall be required to use the name of the Accredited Program only in accordance with the Uniform Standards and with any more specific requirements that may be imposed by the affected Accredited Program. SOI shall have an ongoing right to approve the ways in which any SO Mark is used by such companies, or by Accredited Programs, in announcing and publicizing their support for Special Olympics. Accredited Programs are responsible for reviewing and approving, in advance, all advertisements or promotions for such events that will refer to the name "Special Olympics" in order to insure that they comply with the

**General Rules.**

4. Clowns, cartoon-related and product-related characters add to the festive nature of an Olympic Town and can play a significant role in providing a fun and entertaining area for Games athletes and guests. However, it is a Special Olympics policy that clowns and cartoon-related and product-related characters shall be restricted to Olympic Town as entertainment events and are specifically prohibited from appearing at the following:

Opening Ceremonies

Closing Ceremonies

Awards Venues

Sports Venues

Victory Banquets

This restriction is necessary to ensure that Special Olympics Games and competitions continue are true sports events carried on with true Olympic dignity and pageantry.

5. Face painting activities are prohibited at any Special Olympics Games, tournaments, competitions, exhibitions or demonstrations. This prohibition includes those activities as part of Olympic Town activities.

---

**GENERAL****SECTION R - ASSOCIATION OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS NAME AND LOGO WITH TOBACCO PRODUCTS AND ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES**

1. Use of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco Products. No Accredited Program shall knowingly permit the use of any alcohol or tobacco products at any Special Olympics training or competition venue.
2. Prohibitions Concerning Association of the Special Olympics Name or SO Marks with Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco Products. No Accredited Program shall permit the name "Special Olympics," the SO Logo or any other SO Mark to be publicly or visibly connected or associated with the name or trademark of any of the following companies or products:
  - a. any tobacco product, or the manufacturer or distributor of a tobacco product;
  - or
  - b. any alcoholic beverage, or the manufacturer or distributor of an alcoholic beverage.
3. Permitted Activities. The prohibition set forth in the preceding subsection shall not prevent an Accredited Program from engaging in or authorizing any of the following:
  - a. Accepting a so-called "blind" contribution that is not publicized, promoted or publicly acknowledged by the Accredited Program in any way (except to the extent that the source of the contribution must be reported on tax returns or other filings made with governmental authorities, which are then available for public inspection);
  - b. Allowing the name "Special Olympics," the SO Logo, and/or other SO Marks to be publicly associated with the names of products that are not tobacco products or alcoholic beverages, even if they are manufactured or distributed by companies that also manufacture or distribute tobacco products or alcoholic beverages;
  - c. Allowing the name "Special Olympics," the SO Logo, and/or other SO Marks to be publicly associated with the names of manufacturers or distributors of alcoholic beverages, as distinguished from the products or the product names themselves, if those company names do not contain the brand name or generic title of an alcoholic beverage.
4. Obtaining Required Guidance from SOI. An Accredited Program shall contact SOI for guidance and further authorization in any instance where it is uncertain whether the Accredited Program may accept funds or other support from a company associated with tobacco products or alcoholic beverages. SOI's decision on such matters will be final and binding on the Accredited Program.

**SECTION S - STRUCTURE AND CONDUCT OF GAMES**

1. World and Multi-National Games Organizing Committees. From time to time SOI authorizes the establishment of a GOC to organize and conduct world or multi-national competitions. SOI must approve the formation of any GOC and the conditions under which it will conduct its affairs. Ordinarily, the GOC is incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation in the political/administrative entity where the Games will be held. The responsibilities of each GOC shall be set forth in a detailed written agreement with SOI. Each GOC shall agree to adhere strictly to the General Rules and the Sports Rules as well as SOI's Charter for World/Regional Games.
2. Tournaments and Invitational Games. From time to time SOI may directly organize or sanction Accredited Programs to conduct tournaments or invitational games for Special Olympics athletes. SOI will prescribe in written policies and rules applicable to each such event, in addition to the General Rules and the Sports Rules.
  - a. **Accredited Programs' Authority to Conduct.** Accredited Programs at Level I, II, or a III may not, without SOI's prior written authorization, conduct their U.S. Program Games or National Games as invitational games to which athletes from other Accredited Programs are invited to attend ("Invitational Games"). If SOI authorizes a specific Accredited Program to hold its Games as Invitational Games, the requirements of this Section 2 shall apply to such Invitational Games, unless

---

**GENERAL**

otherwise indicated by SOI in its written directives to the Accredited Program regarding its authority to hold such Invitational Games.

- b. **Sub-Programs.** Sub-Programs are not eligible to host Invitational Games unless otherwise approved by SOI in a specific instance. Invitations to attend Invitational Games shall not be distributed to, or accepted by, any Sub-Program without SOI's prior written authorization.
- c. **Purpose of Invitational Games.** Accredited Programs may be permitted to hold their Games periodically as Invitational Games in order to foster greater cooperation and exchange of information between Accredited Programs within a particular Region and in order to give new or developing Accredited Programs the opportunity to learn and benefit from participation in the Games of a more developed Accredited Program, particularly until that new Accredited Program reaches a point where it can conduct its own Games, as required by the Accreditation Criteria. Notwithstanding the preceding sentence, the opportunity to participate in another Accredited Program's Invitational Games is not, and may not be viewed as, a substitute for the obligation of the guest Accredited Program to conduct its own Games, or if applicable under the Accreditation Criteria, to at least make demonstrable progress toward that goal.
- d. **Programs That May Participate; Rules for Extending and Accepting Invitations.** SOI shall determine whether an Accredited Program is eligible to send or accept invitations to participate in Invitational Games. Unless otherwise authorized by SOI:
  1. **Host Programs.** An Accredited Program may not host Invitational Games in any year in which Regional or World Games are scheduled to take place in any location falling within that Accredited Program's Region. Invitations may be issued by the hosting Accredited Program to no more than five (5) other Accredited Programs unless SOI approves the issuance of invitations to additional Accredited Programs. Invitations shall be extended only to the Executive/National Directors of other invited Accredited Programs, and only to Accredited Programs that are located in the same Region as the host Accredited Program.
  2. **Guest Programs.** Accredited Programs may accept only one invitation each year to participate in the Invitational Games held by another Program (as determined by the date(s) of the Invitational Games in question) unless otherwise approved by SOI. If SOI authorizes an Accredited Program to attend more than one Invitational Games in a given one-year period, that Program shall take different athletes to each Invitational Games in order to maximize the number of athletes benefiting from attendance at Invitational Games.
  3. **Special Invitations to Non-Accredited Organizations.** Accredited Programs may not extend invitations to participate to any Sub-Programs, or to any club organization or entity that is not an Accredited Program without SOI's prior written approval. In certain cases, SOI may authorize an organization in a nation that has no Accredited Program to participate in an Accredited Program's Invitational Games, as a means of working toward establishing an Accredited Program. In any case in which SOI authorizes such participation, SOI will so notify the hosting Accredited Program in writing and outline for the attending organization all terms and conditions for that organization's participation in the hosting Accredited Program's Invitational Games.
- e. **Cost of Invitational Games.** The host Accredited Program shall be solely responsible for all costs associated with the conduct of Invitational Games. No such costs shall be imposed on any guest Accredited Program without SOI's approval or without the prior written consent of the guest Accredited Program. However, each guest Accredited Program shall be solely responsible for all travel costs for its delegation to and from the site of the Invitational Games. Accredited Programs that desire to attend Invitational Games are strongly encouraged to pay for the costs associated with that participation using funds raised specifically for that purpose, rather than funds that are otherwise needed to support that Accredited Program's annual operating budget.
- f. **Procedures for Obtaining SOI Approval.** Host and guest Accredited Programs shall comply with the following procedures in seeking authorization from SOI to host or attend Invitational Games:

---

**GENERAL**

1. **Host Programs.** Accredited Programs desiring to host Invitational Games shall submit a written request to SOI for authorization to conduct its Games as Invitational Games, setting forth the date and location of those Games, the number and identity of the other Accredited Programs to be invited and the number of guest athletes projected to attend. All such information shall be submitted to SOI using a standardized form approved by SOI (the "Invitational Games Authorization Form"). The Invitational Games Authorization Form shall be submitted to SOI at least six (6) months before the scheduled start of the Invitational Games. The applying Accredited Programs shall specifically indicate on its Invitational Games Authorization Form whether it seeks authorization from SOI for a departure from any of the standardized requirements for Invitational Games set forth in this subsection f, and if so, the Program's basis for seeking that departure. SOI shall act promptly on each such request and shall notify the applying Accredited Program in writing of SOI's decision.
2. **Guest Programs.** All Accredited Programs that have received and that desire to accept invitations to attend Invitational Games shall request SOI's authorization to do so by completing the Invitational Games Authorization Form and submitting it to SOI no later than three (3) months before the scheduled start of the Invitational Games. SOI shall act promptly on each such request and shall notify each prospective guest Accredited Program in writing of SOI's decision.
  - g. **Invitational Tournaments.** The provisions of this Section shall apply as well to proposed "Invitational Tournaments," in which athletes from other Accredited Programs within a particular Region are invited to attend the hosting Accredited Program's Tournament(s) in a particular sport.
3. **Regional Divisions for National Programs.** SOI periodically establishes Regions for the purpose of facilitating the efficient governance and expansion of the Special Olympics Movement, facilitating the exchange of information and ideas between SOI and its Accredited Programs, and facilitating the exchange of information and ideas between individual Accredited Programs located within one or more Regions.
4. **Conduct of World Games.** SOI shall determine all matters concerning the organization and conduct of World Games. Unless otherwise determined by SOI, the following general policies shall govern the conduct of World Games:
  - a. **Frequency.** World Games shall be held every two years, alternating between Summer Games and Winter Games, so that Summer Games and Winter Games shall each be held every four years, with World Summer Games starting as of 1975, and World Winter Games starting as of 1977.
  - b. **Location.** SOI shall determine the location of each World Games, and shall select and contract with each GOC concerning the terms under which that GOC will have the right and the responsibility to organize, finance and conduct particular World Games. SOI shall select the site for each World Games in accordance with the procedures and criteria specified in the World/Regional Games Charter.
  - c. **Governing Rules.** All World Games shall be conducted only with SOI's authorization, and in accordance with the Sports Rules, the World/Regional Games Charter, and the other Uniform Standards.
  - d. **Participating Programs; Quotas and Delegations.** Each Accredited Program has the right, as well as the obligation, to send a delegation of athletes and coaches to each World Games to the extent provided in the Accreditation Criteria that govern the Program's Accreditation Level. SOI shall have the sole authority to establish binding quotas governing the overall size and composition of the delegations of athletes, coaches and other persons to be sent by each Accredited Program to World Games. Once SOI determines these quotas, the affected Accredited Programs shall send delegations to the World Games that comply, as to size and composition, with the quotas established by SOI.
  - e. **Eligible Athletes.** All Accredited Programs shall follow the athlete advancement criteria specified in the Sports Rules in identifying the athletes who are eligible to represent their Accredited Programs at Games. Consistent with those advancement criteria (which are set forth in detail in the SOI Sports Rules), athletes desiring to represent their National Programs in Regional or World Games must first compete in Sub-Program Games and/or National Games held or sponsored within their National Program in order to be eligible for Regional or World Games. Similarly, athletes from U.S.

**GENERAL**

Programs who desire to participate in U.S. Multi-State Games, Regional Games, or World Games must first have competed in Games held or sponsored by their respective Sub-Program and/or U.S. Program.

5. Conduct of SOI-Sanctioned Games. SOI shall determine all matters concerning the organization and conduct of Regional Games, Multi-National Games and U.S. Multi-State Games (which are referred to, individually and collectively, using the generic term "Games" in this Section 5).
  - a. **Frequency.** Such Games may be held in accordance with whatever schedule SOI determines is in the best interests of Special Olympics, except that no Regional Games, Multi-National Games or U.S. Multi-State Games shall be held within the six (6) months before the starting date of any World Games, or within six (6) months after the official closing date of any World Games.
  - b. **Location.** SOI shall determine the location of such Games. SOI shall also select and contract with any Accredited Program that is to have the responsibility for hosting or taking primary responsibility in planning such Games. SOI shall select the site for such Games in accordance with the procedures and criteria specified in the World/Regional Games Charter.
  - c. **Governing Rules.** All such Games shall be conducted only with SOI's authorization and in accordance with the Sports Rules, the World/Regional Games Charter, and the other Uniform Standards.
  - d. **Participating Programs; Eligible Athletes.** SOI shall determine which Accredited Programs are eligible to participate in particular Games and shall also establish the eligibility requirements for the participating athletes in addition to those set forth in Section L. SOI shall have the sole authority to establish binding quotas governing the overall size and composition of the delegations of athletes, coaches and other persons to be sent by Accredited Programs to such Games, as further provided in subsection 4.d., above.

**SECTION T - GAMES RULES COMMITTEES**

1. Each Accredited Program, GOC, and any other Special Olympics sanctioned organization responsible for conducting Games shall appoint a Games Rules Committee.
2. A Games Rules Committee shall consist of three members: one from the Special Olympics organization responsible for conducting the Games; one from the GOC and one who is a coach of an athlete or athletes who will be or are competing in the Games. An alternate shall be named to the Games Rules Committee. The alternate shall be a coach of an athlete or athletes from a team or delegation different from the team or delegation or the coach named to the Games Rules Committee. The alternate shall take the place of the coach in the event that the Games Rules Committee must examine a case involving a member of the team or delegation of the coach named as a member of the Games Rules Committee. The alternate shall be entitled to attend all meetings and to take part in all discussions of the Games Rules Committee, but cannot vote except as provided in the preceding sentence.
3. The Games Rules Committee shall ensure that the Sports Rules are followed and enforced.
4. The Games Rules Committee shall also ensure that the Sports Rules Committee for each sport in the Games is in place and functions as prescribed by the Sports Rules as they apply to the rules of the International Sports Federations and National Governing Bodies.
5. The Special Olympics Sports Rules Advisory Committee shall be the final authority for all rule interpretations and appeals during the Games.

**SECTION U - OFFICIAL SANCTION OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS GAMES**

1. In order to ensure the maintenance of Special Olympics standards, official sanction of National/U.S. Games, Multi-State Games, and Regional Games requires the following:

---

**GENERAL**

- a. An application for sanction shall be made to the SOI Worldwide Games and Competition Department by the GOC at least 180 days in advance of the Games. The application shall provide enough details regarding the Games to ensure that both the spirit and technical aspects of Special Olympics are being and will be maintained.
  - b. All invitations issued to athletes from another National/U.S. Program by the host Games Committee must first be approved by SOI. Invitations shall be sent only to accredited Special Olympics organizations or recognized agencies representing Special Olympics in the countries to which the invitations are being sent.
  - c. National/U.S. Games shall be named for the region of the world, country, state or province in which they take place, e.g. European Summer Special Olympics Games, United Kingdom Summer Special Olympics Games, Utah Winter Special Olympics Games, etc.
  - d. Multi-State Games and Regional Games must be approved by the appropriate Regional Leadership Council.
  - e. The Official Special Olympics logo shall be utilized at all times.
  - f. A full Final Report, in the form of a Games Evaluation, shall be sent to the SOI Chief Executive Officer within sixty (60) days following the Games.
  - g. The GOC or its members or staff must have a proven record of staging high-quality Special Olympics Games or other sports events.
  - h. The metric measurement system shall be used. All Special Olympics Games and competitions shall be conducted using the metric measurement system.
2. The requirements regarding the number of Official Sports and Nationally Popular Sports offered at Special Olympics Games are that:
- a. Each Special Olympics Games shall include as many Official Sports and Nationally Popular Sports as possible.
  - b. The minimum number of Official Sports that must be offered at a sanctioned Summer Special Olympics Games is four, with at least one being a team sport.
  - c. The minimum number of Official Sports that must be offered at a sanctioned Winter Special Olympics Games is two.
  - d. Any number of Nationally Popular Sports can be offered at a sanctioned Summer or Winter Special Olympics Games. It is recommended that at least one Nationally Popular Sport be offered at each Games.
  - e. Nationally Popular Sports shall not be counted as part of the minimum number of Official Sports.
3. At Games competitions, Accredited Programs may offer Official Special Olympics awards in sports that are locally popular and are not currently considered as Special Olympics Official or Nationally Popular Sports. Once the minimum number of Official Sports is conducted at a sanctioned Games, one locally popular sport may be offered at the Games. In order to offer more than one locally popular sport, competition must be conducted in one additional Special Olympics Official or Nationally Popular sport for each locally popular sport that is offered.
- a. In order for the sport to be offered, the following criteria shall be met:
    - (1) The sport has been recognized by the host country's Olympic Committee.
    - (2) A request for adding a sport must be made to SOI on the Games Sanction Form.
    - (3) The sport must be approved by SOI.
    - (4) The sport may not be a currently prohibited sport.
4. The sport may be offered at Games only and not as a separate tournament or event.

**SECTION V - SPECIAL OLYMPICS DIVISIONING.**

The following criteria shall determine how Special Olympics athletes advance to higher levels of Special Olympics competition.

**1. Introduction to Divisioning.**

- a. Special Olympics competitions provide athletes with the opportunity to demonstrate sports skills they have acquired during training. Special Olympics athletes, like all dedicated athletes, should strive for their best performance at each competition. To enhance the competitive experience of the athletes, competitions should be organized to highlight the athletes. In Special Olympics, this means that regardless of an athlete's place of finish, each performance is considered a personal victory. The athlete is paramount.
- b. Special Olympics has developed modified rules, when necessary, in order to maximize the successful participation of all athletes and encourage competition throughout every level of the organization. Competitions must be conducted consistently, in accordance with these recognized rules and capably officiated. In addition, family, friends, and spectators should be given the opportunity to share in the athletes' achievements during the competition.
- c. The fundamental difference that sets Special Olympics competitions apart from those of other sports organizations is that athletes of all ability levels are encouraged to participate, and every athlete is recognized for his or her performance. Competitions are structured so that athletes compete with other athletes of similar ability in equitable divisions. Historically, Special Olympics has suggested that all divisions be created so that the variance between the highest and lowest scores within that division not differ by more than 10%. This 10% statement is not a rule, but should be used as a guideline for establishing equitable divisions when the number of athletes competing is appropriate.

**2. Responsibilities of the Competitor.**

- a. Every athlete shall abide by the letter and spirit of the rules and be responsible for conducting himself or herself in a sportsmanlike manner at all times. Athletes who do not conduct themselves in this manner, or who are offensive by action or language toward other athletes, coaches, volunteers, opponents, officials, and/or spectators, may be disqualified from further participation.
- b. Athletes who do not participate honestly and with maximum effort in all preliminary trials and/or finals shall be disqualified from all remaining events by the relevant Sports Rules Committee at the competition.

**3. Responsibilities of the Coach.**

- a. Coaches shall place the health and safety of Special Olympics athletes above all else.
- b. Every coach shall abide by the letter and spirit of the rules and be responsible for conducting himself or herself in a sportsmanlike manner at all times. Coaches who do not conduct themselves in this manner, or who are offensive by action or language toward athletes, other coaches, volunteers, opponents, officials and/or spectators, may be prohibited from coaching.
- c. Coaches shall be knowledgeable about all existing Special Olympics and International Governing Body competition rules and regulations applicable to their sport and shall prepare their athletes prior to competition in accordance with those rules.
- d. Coaches shall ensure that athletes compete in events within their sport that challenge their potential and are appropriate to their ability.
- e. Coaches shall be honest and instruct athletes to compete with maximum effort in all preliminary trials and/or finals, or he/she shall be prohibited from coaching by the relevant Sports Rules Committee at the competition.
- f. Team coaches shall ensure that athletes of all ability levels on a team participate in every game.

---

**GENERAL**

- g. Coaches are responsible for assuming that the reported assessments and preliminary or qualifying scores for their athletes accurately reflect the ability of their athletes. If for any reason, this assessment or score is not considered correct by the coach, it is the responsibility of the coach to notify the Competition Manager.
  - h. Team coaches shall be responsible for adhering to the established divisioning rules of each competition and for reporting any incorrect divisioning to the Competition Manager.
4. Responsibilities of the Competition Manager.
- a. Competition Managers shall ensure that a complete range of events is scheduled in each sport to provide maximum competition opportunities to athletes.
  - b. Competition Managers shall organize competitions in accordance with Special Olympics principles and conduct all events to the letter and spirit of the Sports Rules.
  - c. Competition Managers shall utilize the procedures for divisioning when structuring Special Olympics competitions.
  - d. The Competition Manager shall disqualify any coach, athlete, or team that has not adhered to applicable sports the divisioning requirements.
5. Procedures for Divisioning.
- a. An athlete's ability is the primary factor in divisioning Special Olympics competition. The ability of an athlete or team is determined by an entry score from a prior competition or is the result of a seeding round or preliminary event at the competition itself. Other factors that are significant in establishing competitive divisions are age and sex.
  - b. Ideally, competition is enhanced when each division accommodates at least three and no more than eight competitors or teams of similar ability. In some cases, however, the number of athletes or teams within a competition will be insufficient to achieve this goal. The following procedures describe the sequential process for creating equitable divisions and also provides guidance for managing athlete participation when factors preclude ideal divisioning.
6. Individual Sports.
- a. Step One: Divide Athletes By Gender.
    - (1) Divide athletes into two groups based upon gender. Female athletes shall compete against other female athletes, and male athletes shall compete against other male athletes. A relay team that consists of both male and female athletes shall compete in the male division of the competition if there are not enough other relay teams with male and female athletes at the appropriate level of competition.
    - (2) Athletes shall compete against other athletes of the same gender, unless:
      - a) The sport specifically allows co-ed events (e.g., pairs figure skating, bowling, table tennis, ice dancing, tennis, etc.).
      - b) There are only two male or two female athletes within an event. These athletes may compete against one another or be divisioned with athletes of the opposite sex who are of similar age and ability.
      - c) There is only one male or one female athlete within an event. This athlete shall be divisioned with athletes of the opposite sex who are of similar age and ability.
      - d) There is only one athlete, male or female and of any age or ability, registered to compete in an event. This athlete shall be allowed to compete in a single person division in that event.
  - b. Step Two: Divide Athletes by Age.
    - (1) An athlete's age group shall be determined by the athlete's age on the opening date of the competition.

---

**GENERAL**

- (2) Divide male and female athletes into the following age groups: ages 8-11; 12-15; 16-21; 22-29; and ages 30 years and over. An additional age group may be established if there are a sufficient number of competitors in the 30 years and over age group.
- (3) Athletes shall compete against other athletes within the same age group, unless:
- a) There are less than three competitors within an age group. These athletes shall compete in the next oldest age group. That age group shall then be renamed to accurately reflect the entire range of competitors within that age group.
  - b) After completing Step Three, "Divide Athletes By Ability", age groups are broadened and/or individual athletes are reassigned to other age groups to improve the similarity of scores between athletes within a division.
- c. Step Three: Divide Athletes By Ability.
- (1) To complete the divisioning process, the following guidelines shall be applied according to the event being divisioned.
- a) In events that are measured in time, distance, or points:
    - i. For both genders and all age groups, rank athletes in descending order based upon submitted entry scores or preliminary events.
    - ii. Group as many of these ranked athletes so that the highest and lowest scores are as similar as possible and the number of competitors does not exceed eight (8).
    - iii. In situations where the highest and lowest scores within a division are extreme:
      - The age group may be broadened. Athletes within the new age groups should then be re-ranked and grouped into divisions. This process should be repeated until the highest and lowest scores within each division are as similar as possible.or
      - Athletes may be individually reassigned to another division that is more similar to their own ability, regardless of age group.
  - b) In events that are judged and when preliminary events will be conducted during the competition:
    - i. For both genders and all age groups within a performance level, rank athletes in descending order based upon preliminary scores.
    - ii. Group as many of these ranked athletes so that the highest and lowest scores are as similar as possible and the number of competitors does not exceed eight (8).
    - iii. In situations where the highest and lowest scores within a division are extreme:
      - The age group may be broadened. Athletes within the new age groups should then be re-ranked and grouped into divisions. This process should be repeated until the highest and lowest scores within each division are as similar as possible.or
      - Athletes may be individually reassigned to another division that is more similar to their own ability, regardless of age group.
    - iv. The Competition Manager shall have the authority to accommodate deviations in an athlete's preliminary or trial performance results achieved under adverse weather conditions from the same

---

**GENERAL**

athlete's improved performance results achieved in final races under more advantageous weather conditions.

- c) In events that are judged and where preliminary events will not be conducted during the competition:
  - i. The nature of judging precludes the use of scores from prior competitions(s) in divisioning. Without scores from preliminary competition, performance level remains as the only criterion of athlete ability.
  - ii. For both genders and all age groups, identify athletes within each performance level.
  - iii. If more than eight athletes are in the same gender and age group of a performance level, group athletes into divisions of no less than three and no more than eight competitors.

**7. Team Sports.****a. Step One: Divide Teams By Gender.**

- 1) Divide teams into two groups based upon gender. Female teams shall compete against other female teams and male teams shall compete against other male teams. Mixed gender teams are permissible and shall compete against other mixed gender teams or, if there are not enough mixed gender teams, against male teams.
- 2) Teams shall compete against other teams of the same gender, unless:
  - a) There is only one male or one female team within the competition. This team shall be divisioned with teams of the opposite gender who are of similar age and ability.

**b. Step Two: Divide Teams By Age.**

- 1) The age group of a team is determined by the age of the oldest athlete on that team on the opening date of the competition.
- 2) Divide male and female teams into the following age groups: ages 15 and under; 16-21; and 22 and over. An additional group may be established if there are a sufficient number of teams in the "22 and over" age group.
- 3) Teams should compete against other teams within the same age group.

**c. Step Three: Divide Teams By Ability.**

- 1) All Special Olympics team sport competitions shall utilize the sports specific skill assessment tests and a preliminary seeding round to assess the level of ability of the participating teams.
  - a) Refer to the Special Olympics Sports Rules for each team sport for a description of the skills assessment tests and additional information regarding the assessment of team sports for divisioning purposes.
- 2) Group teams according to ability based upon the skills assessment tests and results from the preliminary seeding round.
- 3) Create divisions of no more than eight teams by applying age groups to the teams within each ability group.
- 4) Within each ability group, age groups may be combined to create divisions.
- 5) If there are only two male or two female teams within the competition, these teams shall compete against each other.
- 6) If there is only one team within an age or ability group, that team must be divisioned with other teams, regardless of age or ability.

**8. Equalization of Competition.****a. Timed and Measured Events.**

---

**GENERAL**

- 1) Aquatics, Athletics Cycling, Roller (Speed) Skating and Speedskating athletes shall use the best available performance time/measurement, whether it is from a preliminary event or submitted by the coach, when divisioning athletes for the finals of any event.
  - 2) Any athlete competing in an "Official Event" who completes an event at a time or measurement of 15% better than the preliminary or reported time/measurement shall be subject to disqualification.
  - 3) Any athlete competing in events defined under the heading "provide for meaningful competition for athletes with lower ability levels" who completes an event at a time or measurement 20% better than the preliminary or reported time/measurement shall be subject to disqualification. See sport specific section of Special Olympics Sports Rules to identify events designed for lower ability levels.
- b. Judged Events.
- 1) Judged events shall use the best available performance score, whether it is from a preliminary event or submitted by the coach, when seeding athletes for the finals of any event.
  - 2) Any athlete that completes an event at a score 15% better than the preliminary or reported score shall be subject to disqualification.
- c. Team and Unified Sports® Events.
- 1) Team and Unified Sports® Events shall use the best available performance evaluations available, possibly including preliminary pool play, individual assessments, previous competition records, and/or video of performance.
  - 2) Divisioning is the responsibility of the Competition Manager. The Team Head Coach is responsible for submitting accurate assessment scores and ensuring his/her team participates honestly with maximum effort during all preliminary rounds. Any team that performs significantly better during final rounds than was reported by the coach or demonstrated during preliminary rounds shall be subject to disqualification.
  - 3) The Competition Manager shall have the authority to accommodate deviations in percentage of scores due to course conditions or other unusual circumstances.
9. Conclusion.
- a. Ideally, a sufficient number of athletes or teams will participate at every competition so that equitable divisions of three to eight athletes or teams can be structured. The procedures for divisioning have been developed to assist Competition Managers in applying the principles of fair and equitable competition to athletes of all ability levels within their competitions. Experience has shown that in some competitions, however, there will not be a sufficient number of athletes within every age, gender and ability level to structure ideal divisions. In addition, there may be other factors, such as cultural or demographic influences, that have a further impact on the divisioning process.
  - b. This section was designed to provide Competition Managers with a foundation for competent decision making in these situations. The primary focus throughout the divisioning process should be on the competitiveness of the Special Olympics athlete. Competition Managers are entrusted with this responsibility and must meet the challenge of providing Special Olympics athletes with quality competition.

**SECTION W - AGE GROUPS**

1. Athletes must be at least eight years of age to participate in Special Olympics competition. Certain sports and events may further restrict athlete participation based on age. If pertinent, additional age requirements are indicated in the specific rules for each sport in the Sports Rules.
2. The following age groups shall normally be used for all Special Olympics competitions:

---

**GENERAL**

## a. Individual Sports:

- Ages 8-11
- Ages 12-15
- Ages 16-21
- Ages 22-29
- Ages 30 and over

Additional age groups may be established if there are a sufficient number of competitors in the "30 and over" age group.

## b. Team Sports:

- Ages 15 and under
- Ages 16-21
- Ages 22 and over

Additional age groups may be established if there is a sufficient number of teams in the "22 and over" age group.

## 3. Age Groups may be combined under the following circumstances:

- a. In individual sports, if there are less than three competitors within an age group, the athletes shall compete in the next oldest age group. That age group shall then be renamed to accurately reflect the entire range of competitors within that age group. Age groups may also be combined to reduce the variance between the highest and lowest scores within a division.
- b. In team sports within each ability group age groups may be combined to create divisions. If there is only one team within an age or ability group, that team must be combined with other teams for competition.
- c. An athlete's age group shall be determined by the athlete's age on the opening day of the competition.
- d. The age group of a team is determined by the age of the oldest athlete on that team on the opening date of the competition.

**SECTION X - COMMERCIAL MESSAGES**

1. Commercial Messages on Athlete Uniforms and Competition Numbers. In order to avoid commercial exploitation of persons with mental retardation, no uniforms, and no bibs or other signs bearing competition numbers, that are worn by Special Olympics athletes during any competition or during any opening or closing ceremonies of any Games may be emblazoned with commercial names or commercial messages. The only commercial markings that may be displayed on athletes' uniforms during Games competitions and opening and closing ceremonies are the normal commercial markings of the manufacturer. For purposes of this subsection, "normal commercial markings" are limited to the following:
  - a. On larger clothing items, such as shirts, jackets, pants, jerseys, and sweatshirts, one logo or commercial name per clothing item is permissible, if that name or display does not exceed an area of six square inches or about thirty-nine square centimeters (such as a display measuring 2" x 3" or 5.08 cm x 7.62 cm);
  - b. On small clothing items, such as caps, socks, hats, gloves and belts, one logo or commercial name per clothing item is permissible, if that name or display does not exceed an area of three square inches or 19.35 square centimeters; and
  - c. On athletic shoes, no logos or commercial names are permissible except for names and logos that are included by the manufacturer on athletic shoes that are sold to the general public.
2. Commercial Markings on Other Athlete Apparel or Accessories. Special Olympics athletes who are not engaged in competition or in opening/closing ceremonies may wear, carry, or use at Games venues other than the sites of competition (such as at training or practice sessions) clothing and/or non-apparel items that are not part of their sports equipment (such as tote bags,) that contain small and attractively designed identifications of corporate or organizational sponsors.

---

**GENERAL**

3. Displays of Commercial Messages by Volunteers. Volunteers may wear clothing that bears small and attractively designed names or logos identifying corporate or organizational sponsors while attending Games competitions, so long as those displays do not exceed an area of six square inches or its metric equivalent.
4. Displays of Commercial Messages by Sports Officials. Sports officials may not wear, carry or use clothing or other apparel items that contain the names or logos of corporate or organizational sponsors (except for the normal commercial markings permitted under subsection (1) above) during the opening or closing ceremonies of any Games, at the site of any Games competition or demonstration, or while officiating at any Games competition or demonstration. At other times, or at Games venues other than the sites of opening and closing ceremonies, competitions or demonstrations (such as at the sites of training and practice sessions), officials may wear, carry or use clothing or other items that contain sponsors' names or logos if those displays comply with those permitted to be displayed by volunteers under subsection 3.
5. Displays of Commercial Messages at Opening Ceremonies. The opening ceremonies of all Games shall celebrate the athletic skill, accomplishments, and courage of Special Olympics athletes in a colorful atmosphere of dignity and joy consistent with the Olympic spirit and the Founding Principles. It is the policy of SOI that no banners or other signage bearing the names of commercial sponsors or their products may be displayed at the site of the opening ceremonies of any World Games, Regional Games, or Multi-National Games. Accredited Programs may permit commercial banners and signage at their opening ceremonies if such banners and signage are subordinate to Special Olympics pageantry, do not violate any other provision of this Section X, and are in utmost good taste consistent with the first sentence of this subsection.
6. Displays of Commercial Messages at Other Games Venues. SOI, a GOC, or an Accredited Program may display, or permit others to display, banners or other signage recognizing the support of commercial sponsors at competition venues, at the venue where closing ceremonies are held, and at venues of Games events other than opening ceremonies, so long as such displays otherwise comply with the General Rules and the other Uniform Standards.
7. Prohibition and Display of National Flags. No national flags shall be displayed by any athletes, coaches, or other members of any Accredited Program's Official Delegation at any Games events.

**SECTION Y - OFFICIAL LOGO**

1. Required Use of SO Logo. Each Accredited Program shall use the SO Logo in conjunction with the name of the Accredited Program on all official Accredited Program materials, including, without limitation, on its stationery, business cards, news release letterhead, Games programs, yearbooks, flags and banners, athletes' number tags, athletes' uniforms, posters, brochures, and all informational and promotional material distributed to participants in Special Olympics, to sponsors, or to the general public.
2. Use of Official Credit Line. The official credit line to be used by all Accredited Programs (the "Official Credit Line") consists of the following:

Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation

Authorized and Accredited by [Affiliated with] Special Olympics, Inc.  
for the Benefit of Persons with Mental Retardation [Mental Handicap]

The Official Credit Line shall be displayed prominently on all stationery, brochures, annual reports, news releases, and other printed materials, and in films, slides or video presentations, that are produced or distributed by Accredited Programs. When feasible, the Official Credit Line should also be included in television credits displayed in connection with any programming that is filmed and broadcast by a local station within an Accredited Program's jurisdiction. The specifications for reproducing the Official Credit Line are set forth in the Graphic Standards Guide. Accredited Programs outside the United States may, when using the Official Credit Line, substitute the words "mental handicap" for the phrase "mental retardation."

**GENERAL****SECTION Z - USE OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS AWARDS**

## 1. General Guidelines

- a. **Award Ceremonies.** All award ceremonies conducted during Games and Tournaments shall have as their focus the dignity and accomplishments of the participating athletes and shall be conducted in a solemn and colorful manner that resembles, as much as is reasonably practicable, the awards ceremonies conducted during Olympic competitions.
- b. **Obtaining Awards.** Accredited Programs and GOC's shall obtain all awards to be distributed during Special Olympics competitions only from the supplier(s) designated in writing by SOI as the official authorized supplier(s) of Special Olympics athletic awards. SOI shall determine the size, design, composition and quality of all medals, ribbons and other athletic awards to be used during Special Olympics competitions as provided in these Sport Rules.
- c. **Rules for Distribution of Awards.** Awards shall be distributed during Games and Tournaments only in accordance with the General Rules and these Sports Rules. At all U.S. Program Games, National Games, Regional Games, World Games and any other Games or events sanctioned by SOI, medals shall be presented to the first, second, and third-place winners in each event, and ribbons shall be presented to athletes who finish in fourth through eighth place. Athletes who are disqualified (for reasons other than unsportsmanlike conduct or violations of the divisioning requirements of the Sports Rules) or who do not finish an event shall be presented with a participation ribbon. Medals shall not be awarded to athletes placing fourth through eighth within a division.
- d. **Ties.** In the case of a tie, each athlete or team that has achieved the same result shall receive the award for the highest place (for example, two athletes who tie for second place shall each receive the silver medal). Athletes or teams that follow shall receive the appropriate award for their order of finish (for example, an athlete who crossed the finish line fourth following the two athletes who tied for second, shall receive the fourth place ribbon).

The following table illustrates how this rule should be applied.

<b>Athlete</b>	<b>Performance/Score</b>	<b>Award/Place</b>
Andrew	11.2 seconds	1st – gold
Mohammad	12.3	2nd – silver
Pablo	12.3	2nd – silver
Mirek	13.1	4th – 4th place ribbon

- e. **Special Recognition.** In addition to medals and ribbons, athletes may receive special recognition for significant accomplishments (e.g., Highest Pins Over Average, Most Improved Athlete, Sportsmanship, etc.) following the official awards ceremony.
- f. **Mementos.** All athletes at a competition may be presented with a memento in recognition of their attendance at that event. These mementos, however, shall not be similar to the competitive awards presented to athletes at the event.

## 2. Individual Sports.

- a. An athlete who is the sole competitor in an event may receive a first place award for his or her performance.
- b. An athlete who is the only male or female within an event and has divisioned with athletes of the opposite gender may receive a first place award for his or her performance if this practice is permitted by the National Governing Body for that sport. (World or Multi-National Games shall use the International Sports Federation rules in similar cases.)
- c. An athlete who "Did Not Show", "Did Not Finish" or is "Disqualified" for a sports rules infraction shall receive a participation ribbon.
- d. An athlete determined to have not participated honestly and with maximum effort in all preliminary trials and/or finals shall not receive an award of any kind.

**GENERAL**

- e. An athlete who has been disqualified from the competition for unsportsmanlike conduct shall not receive an award of any kind.
  - f. When two or more divisions compete at the same time (e.g., all divisions of the 500 meter run are conducted together), awards for each division shall be determined independently, based on the results of each division within that event.
3. Team Sports.
- a. A team trophy may be awarded to teams placing first through third within a division at any Special Olympics competition. Individual athletes on those teams may receive a trophy only at a single team-sport tournament.
  - b. When there is only one male or female team within an event that has been divisioned with teams of the opposite gender, this team may receive a first place award for its performance if this practice is permitted by the National Governing Body for that sport. (World or Multi-National Games shall use the International Sports Federation rules in similar cases.)
  - c. Entire teams or individual members of a team who "Did Not Show", "Did Not Finish" or are "Disqualified" for a sports rules infraction shall receive a participation ribbon.
  - d. Entire teams or individual members of a team that are determined, by the sports specific rules committee at a competition, to have not participated honestly and with maximum effort in all preliminary trials and/or finals shall not receive an award of any kind.
  - e. Entire teams or individual members of a team disqualified from the entire competition for unsportsmanlike conduct shall not receive an award of any kind. (This does not include those athletes ejected from one round of competition who are allowed to return to play in the next round or team play.)

**SECTION AA - CRITERIA FOR ADVANCEMENT TO HIGHER LEVEL COMPETITION**

## 1. Introduction.

Competitions are held at a number of levels within the Special Olympics Movement. The criteria used to determine how athletes from all sports advance from one Games or Tournament to the next is an important responsibility each Accredited Program must administer. The criteria for athlete advancement, along with the divisioning procedures, are considered two of the most critical elements of Special Olympics and serve to distinguish it from virtually every other sports organization in the world. Adherence to the fundamental principles of athlete advancement is essential for the consistent implementation and development of Special Olympics Programs world-wide. In addition, Accredited Programs are encouraged to develop selection criteria for coaches based on technical background and practical experience that will enhance the competitive experience of Special Olympics athletes.

## 2. Fundamental Principles.

- a. Athletes of all ability levels have an equal opportunity to advance to the next higher level competition.
- b. Each competition reflects all aspects of the previous competition, including but not limited to the age, gender and ability level of athletes and the variety of sports events competed in at the previous competition.

## 3. Quota Allocation.

- a. All Accredited Programs need to have a system for quota allocation to manage the number of athletes attending a competition. The quota allocation process utilize shall not violate the Fundamental Principles of athlete advancement (listed above).
- b. The procedures used for selecting athletes to fill assigned quotas for an event must follow the procedures set forth in this section, unless a waiver is granted from the appropriate body.

## 4. Eligibility For Advancement.

- a. An athlete is eligible to advance to the next competition provided she or he has:

---

**GENERAL**

1. Participated in an organized training program directed by a qualified coach consistent with Special Olympics rules of training and competition (e.g., Sports Rules, Sports Skills Guide, etc.), and occurring at a level of frequency that provides necessary skill acquisition and preparation for competition in the specific sports and events in which the athlete competes. The recommended minimum training time is 10 hours within two months prior to the competition.
  2. Participated in the previous competition (e.g., an athlete must compete in the National/U.S. Games before advancing to the World Games), with the following two exceptions:
    - When the Games or Tournament is the first competition opportunity for an athlete (e.g., at the Local or Area level), previous competition experience is not required. Some flexibility is also left to Accredited Programs for determining, in exceptional circumstances, eligibility for participation prior to completing the recommended minimum training time (e.g., a basketball team may begin league play after five one-hour practices).
    - A team for which there has been no competition opportunity at a Tournament or Games shall be eligible to advance to the next competition.
  - b. Training and previous competition experience must be in the same sport as the athlete will be competing in at the next competition. If additional events within that sport are available at the next competition, athletes should receive proper training prior to advancing.
5. Procedure for Athlete and Team Selection.
- a. Determine number of athletes or teams that will be allowed to participate at the next competition by sport and/or event. This is the quota to be filled.
  - b. Identify the number of athletes or teams eligible for advancement within the sport/event based on eligibility requirements.
  - c. If the number of eligible athletes or teams does not exceed the quota, all athletes and teams shall advance.
  - d. If the number of eligible athletes or teams exceeds the quota, athletes or teams that advance shall be selected as follows:
    1. Priority is given to first place finishers from all divisions of the sport/event. If the number of first place finishers exceeds the quota, select athletes or teams to advance by random draw.
    2. If there are not enough first place finishers to fill the quota, all first place finishers shall advance. The remaining quota shall be filled by a random draw of second place finishers from all divisions of the sport/event.
    3. If the quota is large enough for all second place finishers to advance, the remaining quota shall be filled by a random draw of third place finishers from all divisions of the sport/event.
    4. Repeat this process, adding each place of finish as necessary, until the quota is filled.
  - e. These procedures apply to both individual and team sports.
  - f. An athlete shall not be barred from advancement based on prior competition experience (e.g., an athlete shall not be prohibited from advancing to World Games solely on the basis that she or he attended World Games in the past).
6. Adherence.
- a. As an essential component of the Special Olympics Movement, the criteria for athlete advancement must be adhered to. Under extraordinary circumstances when the criteria cannot be met, authority to deviate from established procedures may be requested, provided the alternate selection procedures do not conflict with the Fundamental Principles of athlete advancement.
  - b. Accredited Programs may request authorization to add additional criteria for advancement based on behavior, medical or judicial considerations and/or to deviate from these advancement procedures due to the size or nature of their Program.

---

**GENERAL**

- c. Requests to deviate from the established procedures must be submitted in writing as follows:
  1. For advancement to Multi-National and World Games: SOI will consider and approve/disapprove all requests.
  2. For advancement to Competitions at or below the National/U.S. Level: the Accredited Program will consider and approve/disapprove all requests. SOI shall have the right and responsibility to review approved deviations during the accreditation process.

**SECTION AB – UNIFIED SPORTS™**

1. Special Olympics Unified Sports™ is a program that combines Special Olympics athletes and athletes without mental retardation (partners) on sports teams for training and competition. Age and ability level matching of athletes and partners, and the athlete/partner ratio are defined on a sport-by-sport basis. Special Olympics Unified Sports™ partners may be any individual that does not have mental retardation. (see Unified Sports™ table p. I.34)
2. Health and Safety.
  - a. Coaches should place the health and safety of all athletes above all else; this is particularly important in the selection of appropriate Athletes and Partners that participate on any Special Olympics Unified Sports® team.
  - b. In consideration of safety and dominant play, individuals with significantly greater skill than other team members may be prohibited from participation on Special Olympics Unified Sports® team since their participation may cause a risk to others (e.g., a softball player who can hit sharp line drives in a division where other players may not be able to field well enough to protect themselves).
3. Philosophical Considerations.
  - a. When Athletes and Partners are of similar ability and age, their Special Olympics Unified Sports® experience is enhanced. Every attempt should be made to keep all teammates as closely matched as possible. This will decrease the risk of injury to themselves and others and provide a more meaningful sports experience.
  - b. Members of a Special Olympics Unified Sports® team should be able to demonstrate fundamental skills and strategies of the sport.
  - c. While there are specific rules governing the number of Unified Sports® Athletes and Partners required during competition, it is also recommended to maintain a proportionate number of Athletes and Partners on the overall roster (as close to 50/50 as possible) so that the possibility of forfeiting a game due to not meeting the required line up ratio is decreased and the Unified Sports® experience is enhanced in both training and competition.
4. Conduct of Competition.
  - a. All Special Olympics rules and regulations apply equally to Athletes and Partners with the following exception: Partners are required to complete a Unified Sports® Partner Application, which includes an applicant's medical history, release from liability, and background information
  - b. Competition shall be governed by the Sports Rules. Specific rules for Unified Sports® (e.g., the number of Athletes and Partners required during competition) are provided in the Rules for each sport.
  - c. Special Olympics Unified Sports® teams shall be placed in competitive divisions with other Special Olympics Unified Sports® teams based on ability and age, according to established procedures for Special Olympics divisioning.
  - d. Official Special Olympics Unified Sports® Awards, or Special Olympics Awards, shall be presented to both Athletes and Partners according to established procedures for the use of Special Olympics Awards.
  - e. Modifications have been added in selected sports to ensure the meaningful involvement of all athletes.

**GENERAL**

**SPECIAL OLYMPICS UNIFIED SPORTS™  
SPORTS SPECIFIC PARAMETERS**

		Similar Age	Similar Ability	Unified Sports Athlete-Partner Ratio for competition on field of play at one time	
		R = Required P = Preferred	R = Required P = Preferred	# of Athletes	# of Partners
<b>Team Sports</b>					
<b>Basketball</b>	Team Competition	R	R	3	2
<b>Football</b>	5-A-Side	R	R	3	2
<b>Football</b>	11-A-Side	R	R	6	5
<b>Softball</b>	Team Competition	R	R	5	5
<b>Team Handball</b>	Team Competition	R	R	4	3
<b>Volleyball</b>	Team Competition	R	R	3	3
<b>Floor Hockey</b>	Team Competition	R	R	3	3
<b>Individual Sports</b>					
<b>Aquatics</b>	Relays	R	R	2	2
<b>Athletics</b>	Relays	R	R	2	2
<b>Badminton</b>	Doubles	P	R	1	1
<b>Badminton</b>	Mixed Doubles	P	R	1	1
<b>Bocce</b>	Doubles	P	P	1	1
<b>Bocce</b>	Team	P	P	2	2
<b>Bowling</b>	Doubles	P	P	1	1
<b>Bowling</b>	Team	P	P	2	2
<b>Cycling</b>	Tandem Time Trials	P	P	1	1
<b>Golf</b>	Team Play	P	P	1	1
<b>Roller Skating</b>	Pairs/Dance Team	P	P	1	1
<b>Sailing</b>	Crew of 2	P	P	1	1
<b>Sailing</b>	Crew of 3	P	P	2	1
<b>Snowshoeing</b>	Relays	R	R	2	2
<b>Table Tennis</b>	Doubles	P	R	1	1
<b>Table Tennis</b>	Mixed Doubles	P	R	1	1
<b>Tennis</b>	Doubles	P	R	1	1
<b>Figure Skating</b>	Pairs Skating	P	R	1	1
<b>Figure Skating</b>	Ice Dancing	P	R	1	1
<b>Speed Skating</b>	Relays	R	R	2	2
<b>Cross Country</b>	Relays	R	R	2	2

Please refer to Special Olympics Sports Rules for additional information and details for conducting Unified Sports competition.

Individual Sports for which Unified Sports events will not be included.

Equestrian	Alpine Skiing
Gymnastics	Snowboarding
Power Lifting	Snowshoeing