

Code of Conduct

Special Olympics is an athlete-centered movement that welcomes athletes with intellectual disabilities of all abilities as they are.

The SO Indiana *Code of Conduct* was written to establish a system that encourages all participants to adhere to the Special Olympics philosophy, operating policies, and rules. Specific information on these issues is contained in the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules. The County Coordinator accepts the responsibility of understanding these guidelines and communicating them to participants in his/her program.

A. Sportsmanship

1. I will practice good sportsmanship.
2. I will act in ways that bring respect to me, my coaches, my team, and Special Olympics.
3. I will not use bad language.
4. I will not swear or insult other persons.
5. I will not fight with other athletes, coaches, volunteers, or staff.

B. Training and Competition

1. I will train regularly.
2. I will learn and follow the rules of my sport.
3. I will listen to my coaches and the officials and ask questions when I do not understand.
4. I will always try my best during training, divisioning, and competitions.
5. I will not "hold back" in preliminary competition just to get into an easier finals competition division.

C. Responsibility for My Actions

1. I will not make inappropriate or unwanted physical, verbal, or sexual advances on others.
2. I will not smoke in non-smoking areas.
3. I will not drink alcohol or use illegal drugs at Special Olympics events.
4. I will not take drugs for the purpose of improving my performance.
5. I will obey all laws and Special Olympics and National Federation/Governing Body rules for my sport(s).

This *Code of Conduct*, written by Special Olympics athletes, appears as part of the Athlete and Unified Sports® Partner applications. When signed by the participant and/or his/her parent, the participant acknowledges that if he/she violates the Code he/she will be subject to a range of consequences, up to and including being prohibited from participation in Special Olympics.

RESTRICTING INVOLVEMENT OF A SPECIAL OLYMPICS PARTICIPANT

1. Applicants

If an athlete with a criminal record or history of violent or abusive behavior applies to participate in a County Program, the State Office will evaluate the acceptance of the athlete based on the following criteria: type of offense or incident, recency of the offense/incident occurred, number of offenses, athlete capacity, and medication variables.

Therefore each athlete with a criminal record or a behavioral problem must be individually evaluated based on Part 2 of the *Athlete Application for Participation* (Pages 51-52).

Unified Sports® partners may be restricted based on results of the background check.

2. Current Participants

Athletes or Unified Sports® Partners may be restricted from participation based on violations to the *Code of Conduct*. Behavior contrary to the *Code of Conduct* at an official competition will be under the authority of and subject to action by the Games/Event Director.

Behavior contrary to the *Code of Conduct* at all other Special Olympics-related activities (defined as practices, field trips, or special events) will be under the authority of and subject to action by the County Coordinator or his/her designee.

Specific complaints about significant violations of the *Code of Conduct* must be submitted in writing to the State Office within seven (7) days of the incident, citing specific behavior, date of violation, site of violation, witnesses to the violation, and signed by the complaining party. The *Code of Conduct Report Form* is located on Page 28.

Significant violations include physical aggression (fighting), sexual misconduct, or other criminal behavior.

Depending on the facts, the County Program can employ one (1) or more of the following actions for an applicant or current participant.

1. **Allow the athlete to participate on a probationary basis.** This gives the Program, the athlete, and the family a chance to review conduct on a systematic basis and to make any changes the Program deems necessary. The athlete and the family, care-giver or guardian should be informed from the outset that participation is conditional upon continued satisfactory behavior, what the probationary period is, and the system for review.
2. **Ensure there is a one-on-one volunteer to chaperone the athlete.** In the case of a non-violent athlete, the Program may ensure that there is a one-on-one volunteer to chaperone an athlete with a history of sexual abuse. The volunteer must be informed of the athlete's past behavior (without violating any privacy laws) and should be capable of helping the athlete avoid situations that may trigger unacceptable behavior. If the athlete participates as part of a group home or other type of facility, the Program may require that the home or facility provide the volunteer.
3. **Require the athlete attend counseling or anger management courses.** Athletes exhibiting certain types of behavior may respond well to counseling services including anger management, stress reduction or psychotherapy. Programs cannot provide these services; however, Programs can require that athletes attend such meetings or sessions as a condition of participation. This option may be combined with other options, and should be monitored to ensure compliance/progress.
4. **Prohibit athletes with histories of sexual abuse or violent behavior from overnight trips.** This option is less desirable than assigning a one-on-one volunteer to an athlete who has previously engaged in inappropriate sexual behavior or violent behavior, but would be appropriate when the risk to others cannot be sufficiently eliminated by a chaperone.
5. **Restrict the sports in which an athlete may compete.** Some sports, such as flag football, soccer, and basketball, involve physical contact and emotion that can agitate an athlete to the point that he/she has a violent reaction. One option is to steer the athlete into sports such as track & field or aquatics with a lower likelihood of physical contact.
6. **Suspend the athlete temporarily.** A temporary suspension for a defined period of time may be the best solution depending on the seriousness of the behavior, in which case the Program should make clear to the athlete and family/guardian what steps must be taken for reinstatement, including when the review will take place, by whom, and what factors will be considered.
7. **Expel the athlete from or deny participation in Special Olympics.** This is the last and least desirable option in as much as it is the harshest for an athlete and is the most likely to lead to litigation. Thus, expulsion or denial of participation must be subject to due process safeguards, including a hearing and right to appeal, in order to protect the athlete and the Program.

SUSPENSION OR EXPULSION

Expulsion or suspension of a participant for more than 90 days requires pre-approval of the State Office and implementation of due process measures. When pursuing this course of action, contact Jeff Mohler at jmohler@soindiana.org.

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A. Respect for Others

1. I will respect the rights, dignity, and worth of athletes, coaches, other volunteers, friends and spectators in Special Olympics.
2. I will treat everyone equally regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion, or ability.
3. I will be a positive role model for the athletes I coach.

B. Ensure a Positive Experience

1. I will ensure that for each athlete I coach, the time spent with Special Olympics is positive.
2. I will respect the talent, developmental stage, and goals of each athlete.
3. I will ensure each athlete competes in events that challenge that athlete's potential and are appropriate to that athlete's ability.
4. I will be fair, considerate, and honest with athletes, using simple, clear language.
5. I will ensure that accurate scores are provided for entry of an athlete into any event.
6. I will instruct each athlete to perform to the best of the athlete's ability at all competitions (including preliminary events) in accordance with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules.

C. Act Professionally and Take Responsibility for My Actions

1. My language, manner, preparation, appearance, and presentation will demonstrate high standards.
2. I will display control, respect, dignity, and professionalism to all involved in the sport (athletes, coaches, opponents, officials, administrators, parents, spectators, media, etc), and encourage athletes to demonstrate the same qualities.
3. I will not drink alcohol, smoke or take illegal drugs while representing Special Olympics at training or during competition.
4. I will refrain from any form of personal abuse towards athletes and others, including verbal, physical, and emotional abuse.
5. I will be alert to any form of abuse from other sources directed toward athletes in my care.

D. Quality Service to the Athletes

1. I will seek continual improvement through performance evaluation and ongoing coach education.
2. I will be knowledgeable about the Sports Rules and skills of the sport(s) I coach.
3. I will provide a planned training program.
4. I will keep copies of the medical, training, and competition records for each athlete I coach.
5. I will follow the Special Olympics and National Federation/Governing Body rules for my sport(s).

E. Health and Safety of the Athletes

1. I will ensure that the equipment and facilities at practice sites and events are safe to use.
2. I will ensure that the equipment, rules, training, and the environment are appropriate for the age and ability of the athletes.
3. I will review each athlete's *Medical Form* and be aware of any limitations on that athlete's participation noted on that form.
4. I will encourage athletes to seek medical advice when required.
5. I will maintain the same interest and support towards sick and injured athletes.
6. I will allow further participation in training and competition only when appropriate.

I understand that if I violate this Code of Conduct I will be subject to a range of consequences, up to and including being prohibited from participation in Special Olympics.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Program: _____ Coach Volunteer