



# Special Olympics Georgia Program Guide

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**Special Olympics**  
Georgia



# Local Program Development Guide

## Section 1: Starting & Structuring Your Local Program

**Special Olympics**  
Georgia



The Local Program is the organizational structure that delivers the mission, programming, and related activities of Special Olympics, and operates as part of the larger Accredited Special Olympics Georgia (SOGA).

Many Accredited Program organizational structures and models exist throughout our movement, requiring unique approaches and situations for Local Programs. It is not the goal of this guide to prescribe or promote a “one size fits all” approach to Local Program development and sustainability. Rather, this guide is offered so you, in collaboration with SOGA, have a greater understanding of successful Local Program operations and structures, and can apply these fundamentals to your Local Program as applicable and useful.

This guide is a resource for Local Program leadership, providing information and tools to successfully offer quality Special Olympics programming in local communities. Local Program leadership is critical to the success of Special Olympics. The grassroots level is the foundation of our worldwide movement and the starting point for each athlete and constituent’s experience.

This guide is divided into the following sections, which may be used in whole or part to enhance your Local Program:

- **Section 1:** Starting and Structuring Your Local Program
- **Section 2:** Athletes
- **Section 3:** Volunteers, Coaches, and Families
- **Section 4:** Sports Management
- **Section 5:** Communications
- **Section 6:** Fundraising
- **Section 7:** Finance and Risk Management

The Local Program Development Guide is a tool to both establish and engage new Local Programs and leaders, and to provide the next level of resources to grow and enhance an existing Local Program. The guide was developed in collaboration with a workgroup of Program leaders and Local Program participants from the following Programs: SO Canada, SO Jamaica, SO Louisiana, SO Maryland, SO North Carolina, SO Ohio, SO Ontario, SO Oregon, SO Southern California, and SO Wisconsin. Special Olympics offers it gratitude for their contributions.

Your SOGA Program Team Members are available to offer additional guidance and support as you work to engage constituents in local Special Olympics opportunities and make the promise of our movement a reality.

***Thank you for your commitment to the mission of Special Olympics.***



## Contents

This section of the Local Program Development Guide addresses the following topics and questions:

- What is a Local Program and what purpose does it serve? (Pages 2-4)
  - How do I build a quality Local Program? (Pages 4-6)
  - Local Program Management Team Position Descriptions (Pages 7-8)
  - Local Program Training Checklists (Pages 9-11)
  - Local Program Growth and Sustainability (Pages 11-12)
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## What is a Local Program and what purpose does it serve?

The Local Program is the heartbeat of Special Olympics and brings our mission and vision to life. This mission is shared by all Special Olympics Programs, and remains consistent at all levels of the movement:

***The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities 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.***

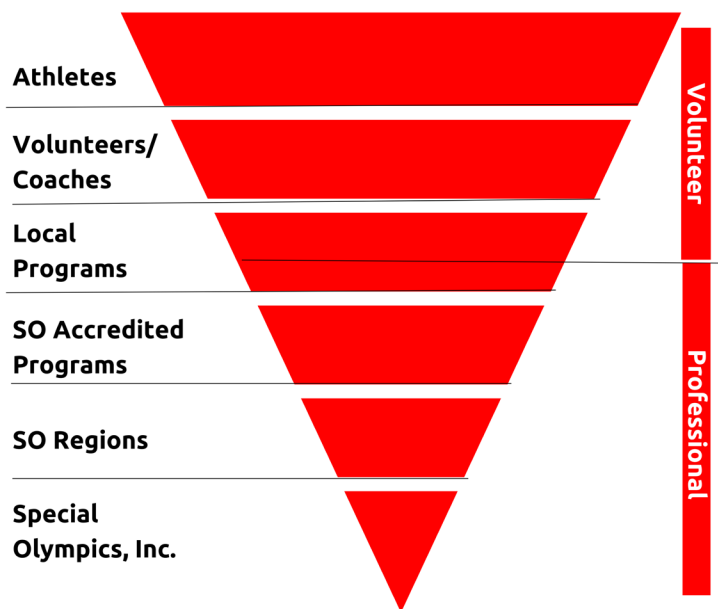
The **vision** of Special Olympics is an inclusive world for all, driven by the power of sport, through which people with intellectual disabilities live active, healthy and fulfilling lives.

## How do Local Programs fit into the overall structure of Special Olympics Georgia?

Each Local Program offers official Special Olympics sports training and competition opportunities for athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and Special Olympics Unified Sports® partners (individuals without intellectual disabilities). A Local Program may originate from a variety of places:

- Geographic areas – Communities, counties, or other land boundaries
- Independent community Special Olympics clubs or teams
- Schools – Public, private, or specialized schools, colleges or universities
- Sports-based organizations, such as Parks and Recreation Departments or YMCAs
- Organizations serving people with intellectual disabilities, such as independent living facilities or adult service providers.

Special Olympics' "inverted pyramid" approach illustrates the importance of Local Programs. The Local Program makes the first – and often, the strongest – impression about the Special Olympics movement. A strong Local Program is necessary to our success: you are the front door of Special Olympics.



## What are the parts of the pyramid, and what is their role?

The pyramid begins with our athletes, and includes many important people that support them, as well as the professional structure of Special Olympics that enables Local Program success.

### Athletes

Individuals of all ages and ability levels are welcome to participate in Special Olympics. To be eligible to participate as a Special Olympics athlete, the individual must be identified as having an intellectual disability. Section 2 of the Local Program Development Guide further outlines athlete eligibility, and your SOGA can provide additional details, including required documentation for participation.

It's important to note that athletes don't embark on their Special Olympics journey alone. They are often supported by the following individuals, among others, along the way:

- Special Olympics Unified Sports® partners are individuals without an intellectual disability who participate in Special Olympics Unified Sports® as teammates.
- Families and caregivers are encouraged to participate at every level of Special Olympics and can be an essential component of a Local Program. All family members of Special Olympics athletes are encouraged to participate in Special Olympics as volunteers, coaches, and/or Unified Sports partners.



## Volunteers

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Special Olympics and serve as the primary source of support for Local Programs. There are numerous volunteer opportunities such as serving as a coach, sports official, chaperone, committee member, fundraising volunteer, and more! Local Programs would not exist without the support and commitment provided by volunteers.

## Special Olympics Professional Structure

The following levels of Special Olympics provide leadership and management for our movement and exist to support our Local Programs in delivering the mission of Special Olympics.

- **Accredited Programs** - Each Special Olympics Accredited Program is a registered charitable organization that exists to deliver and advance the mission of Special Olympics. It is accredited and authorized by Special Olympics, Inc. (SOI) and is responsible for following the policies, rules, and standards set forth by SOI in its delivery of services. It is known as a “Program” (with a capital “P”) of Special Olympics.
- **Special Olympics North America (SONA)** is one of SOI’s seven global regions and is responsible for implementing the policies and initiatives of SOI. SONA provides support and guidance to each of the Accredited Programs within North America (Canada, the United States, and the Caribbean).
- **Special Olympics, Inc. (SOI)** is responsible for the overall leadership and management of all Special Olympics Programs across the globe, which supports millions of athletes, coaches, and volunteers in more than 190 countries and territories.

## **How do I build a quality Local Program?**

Start with recruiting and building a team of leaders who share a vision of excellence for Special Olympics Georgia.

A Local Program Coordinator leads and oversees essential programming, including building a Management Team of volunteers who will help manage crucial operational areas. It is important to know that the Local Program Coordinator is **never alone!** In addition to the Management Team you create, SOGA will provide relevant and appropriate guidance, information, resources, policies, and procedures.

## **Who should I recruit as Management Team members?**

Local Program management team members come from a variety of backgrounds. The most likely candidates may be those already connected to Special Olympics in some fashion:

- Current coaches, volunteers, and Unified Sports partners
- Parents and other family members
- Athletes
- Donors/fans
- Unified Champion Schools® educators and students



- Teachers, professionals, administrators, and paraprofessionals from any school settings – elementary through high school, as well as colleges and universities

As your Local Program grows, you will want to find additional members within your community such as:

- Professionals with experience in key functional areas such as finance, public relations, fundraising, sports, health care, etc.
- Community sports programs, civic groups, and fraternal organizations
- Military and police organizations
- Professionals and young professionals in partnering agencies and businesses

### How is the Management Team structured, and what are the roles?

The Management Team provides leadership, administration, and oversight of the Local Program. At its core, the Management Team performs the necessary functions to allow sports training and competition and Special Olympics programming to exist at the local level.

In the beginning, there may only be a select few Management Team members based on your most essential priorities and needs. As you discuss each member's skills and areas of interest, defined roles will become clear and allow you to start functioning as a team.

A small Management Team may only have a couple members and divide duties like Example #1 (below). As the Local Program grows, duties can be divided so that each person can have a specific focus area. Examples #2 and #3 are sample structures that Management Teams have used. It is important to note that this is your Local Program - you may need to customize these approaches based on how your Local Program delivers the mission and/or the abilities of your Management Team.

#### Sample Management Team - Example #1

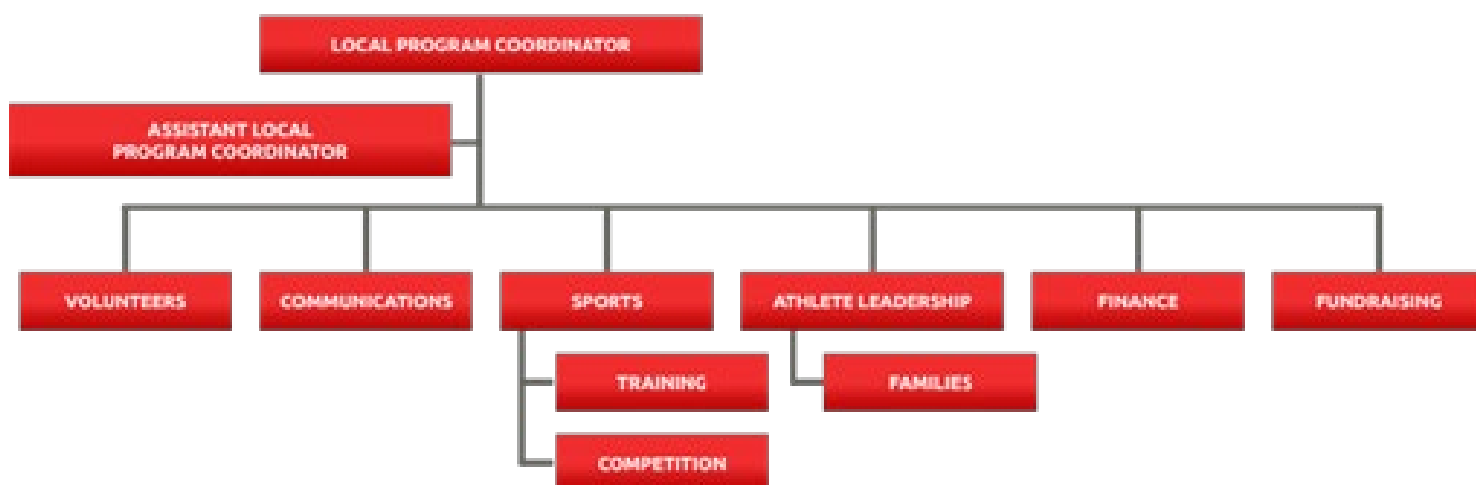




### Sample Management Team - Example #2



### Sample Management Team #3



### What should I expect in each of these roles?

The following duties included are examples of what should be managed by each role. Consult additional Local Program resources as needed for each role or contact SOGA with additional training needs.

The following pages contain sample job descriptions for various Local Program Management Team roles, as well as training checklists you can consult and customize for your specific needs. Please confirm any adjustments needed to these resources with SOGA.



## **Local Program Management Team Position Descriptions**

### **Local Program Coordinator**

The Local Program Coordinator is responsible for providing strategic leadership and management. The Local Program Coordinator plans, organizes, directs, and coordinates programming and services for constituents in their Local Program in accordance with established policies to achieve the goals, objectives, standards, and mission of Special Olympics. This role also works to develop Local Program leaders, manages risk for the Local Program, and works to sustain Local Program resources. The completion of responsibilities will be performed by the Local Program Coordinator and Management Team members who have been empowered to lead and complete the specific functions outlined below.

### **Sports and Competition Coordinator**

The Sports & Competition Coordinator administers the planning and delivery of a Local Program's quality fitness, training, and competition events for Special Olympics athletes and Unified Sports® partners.

Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Coordinate sport-specific training and competition for sports offered
- Recruit qualified coaches, and ensure all are properly trained and certified
- Recruit athletes and Unified partners, and work with management team to ensure all have proper forms on file
- Ensure safe, secure, and appropriate facilities and equipment
- As needed, secure lodging and transportation for competitions.

### **Administrative / Operations Coordinator**

The Administrative/Operations Coordinator ensures that all Special Olympics paperwork, policies, and procedures are adhered to, primarily related to athlete, Unified partner, and volunteer participation. The Administrative/Operations Team also oversees all data provided to SOGA, which might include inputting into Games and Volunteer Management Systems.

### **Finance Coordinator**

The Finance Coordinator is responsible for all aspects of the financial administration for the Local Program. This role also works with the fundraising coordinator to ensure that all fundraising follows the Accredited Program's guidelines.

### **Fundraising Coordinator**

The Fundraising Coordinator oversees activities to raise the funds necessary to support the Local Program through sponsorships/partnerships and the execution of fundraising programs and events. All efforts are managed according to guidelines established by SOGA.

### **Outreach Coordinator**

The Outreach Coordinator is focused on recruitment. The Outreach Coordinator works with schools, transitional programs, families, community sports programs, adult vocational settings, group homes,





community and civic groups, and governmental organizations to connect eligible athletes, families/caregivers, and volunteers with the Local Program.

#### Marketing and Communications Coordinator

The Marketing and Communications Coordinator is responsible for coordinating internal communications (email / text lists, for example) among the Local Program and its Management Team. It also ensures proper use of the Special Olympics name and brand. The position also leads the external promotion of the Local Program and its activities.

#### Volunteer Coordinator

The Volunteer Coordinator is responsible for recruiting, registering, and training Local Program volunteers. They ensure adequate staffing of volunteer roles, that volunteers meet eligibility requirements mandated by their roles, and comply with all SOGA policies and procedures.

#### Unified Champion Schools (UCS) Coordinator

The Unified Champion Schools Coordinator helps develop and implement the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools program in schools within a geographic area. They recruit, educate, and mentor school personnel to develop and implement Unified Champion Schools components and Young Athletes™ in schools, and helps facilitate the participation of school-aged participants in community-based programming.

#### Athlete Leadership Coordinator

The Athlete Leadership Coordinator ensures that the Local Program has meaningful representation by athlete leaders on its Management Team, and in overall operations. This role also ensures that the Local Program offers and/or participates in athlete leadership programming and offerings of SOGA, such as Athlete Leadership Councils or workshops.

#### Young Athletes™ Coordinator

The Young Athletes™ Coordinator recruits and helps register community and school-based young athletes, assists with securing equipment, and ensures culminating event activities are conducted properly. They work with the Administration Team in registering these Young Athletes™. The team also ensures the training of all Young Athletes™ Coordinators.

#### Family Services Coordinator

The Family Services Coordinator is responsible for encouraging family involvement in Local Program activities. Providing local resources and educational workshops, managing hospitality areas at local competitions, and arranging social/networking activities are among the opportunities available to engage families in this role.

#### Fitness / Wellness Coordinator

The Fitness / Wellness Coordinator is responsible for coordinating year-round fitness, health promotion, and access to health and fitness resources for athletes and Unified partners.



## Local Program Management Team Training Checklist

The following is a sample checklist to train individuals for various roles, including requirements, responsibilities, and skills needed for each position.

### Local Program Coordinator / Assistant Local Program Coordinator

- Become familiar with Local Program policies and procedures
  - Recruitment and registration of all participants (volunteers, athletes, etc.)
  - Procedures for effective financial management
  - Overall marketing and communications guidance (press releases, website and social media protocols, emergency / crisis communications)
  - Requesting and/or submitting insurance information for facilities / rental vehicles, including certificates of insurance
  - Risk management procedures, including Incident Report Forms
  - Process of approval of contracts and agreements between Special Olympics and external entities
- Maintain Local Program specific properties (storage, mail & phone information, etc.)
- Facilitate regular meetings of the Management Team

### Sports

- Ensure athlete registration requirements are met
  - With Local Program leadership, ensure all athletes have current medical forms before training. When needed, send renewal request letter and blank medical form to athletes requiring renewals for the upcoming season.
  - Maintain current medicals on file at all Local Program activities
  - With Local Program Coordinator, become familiar with Games Management System as needed, and your role in working within GMS
- Review and comply with all sports rules and policies
  - Maintain acceptable athlete/coach ratios
  - Align with SOGA's procedures and deadlines for coach certification and education.
  - Meet all deadlines for athlete and games registration
  - Become familiar with sports rules that apply to your Local Program (SOI, SOGA, National Governing Body/ies) and advancement criteria
  - Meet all uniform and equipment requirements, and comply with any applicable distribution/return procedures
  - Ensure Code of Conduct has been reviewed and agreed upon by all athletes, Unified Sports® partners, coaches, and families
- Review and follow logistical and risk management guidance as needed
  - Completion and submission of incident report forms



- Maintaining and presenting insurance info for facilities and rental vehicles
- Maintaining facility agreements and related documentation
- Observe SOGA travel procedures, and fulfill the needs of your Local Program according to them
- Communicate with coaches and families within the overall Local Program communication structure/plan

### Volunteers

- Review volunteer classifications (Class A / Class B or equivalents) and the processes by which you recruit, register, and train volunteers accordingly
- New Season Checklist
  - Determine which volunteers need application renewals
  - Ensure all coaches and key Local Program volunteers have valid Class A registration
  - Ensure new volunteers complete the appropriate volunteer paperwork and all related procedures
- Process for new volunteers
  - Update and provide introductory information about volunteer opportunities with your Local Program
  - Collect volunteer form, including background check info (for Class A volunteers), and submit to SOGA per its guidance
  - Provide volunteers with access to Special Olympics General Orientation, Protective Behaviors, and Concussion Training, and maintain your Local Program's records regarding completion (as needed)

### Finance and Fundraising

- Review and observe Special Olympics and SOGA fundraising policies and procedures – including, but not limited to:
  - Any revenue sharing agreements that apply to Local Programs
  - Acknowledgement of individual and memorial donations
  - Documentation and reporting in-kind donations
  - Special event fundraising expectations for promotion and participation
  - Ensure timely thank you letters and receipts are issued
- Familiarize yourself with Local Program financial procedures, such as expense reporting and proper handling and processing of funds
- Enforce Class A and Class B volunteer roles and requirements with respect to fundraising
- Review and align with all Special Olympics and SOGA policies and procedures regarding insurance for facilities and rental vehicles (including requesting certificates of insurance), and contract approvals involving your Local Program



## Communications

- Familiar with all Local Program policies and procedures
- Review all guidance related to marketing and communications duties:
  - Creating and sending public service announcements and press releases
  - Working with local media
  - Preparation of newsletters and mailings
  - Managing social media accounts
  - Creating brand-compliant marketing materials
  - Becoming familiar with SOGA's emergency / crisis communications plan
  - Reviewing and complying with logo usage / branding and language guidelines
  - Observing requirements for maintaining social media or web pages specific to your Local Program.

## **Local Program Growth and Sustainability**

As a Local Program grows, it will have to evolve in order to best serve its participants. As more athletes join a Local Program, more sport opportunities may need to be added, practice facilities will need to be larger or grow in number, the budget will have to increase, and the coach and volunteer base will need to grow. It is wise to plan ahead for growth so you are best prepared for your Local Program to reach its full potential.

### Expand Programming to Schools or Communities

New participants in your Local Program can come from any age or setting. As your Local Program develops, aim to offer all possible entry points to Special Olympics:

- Partnering with local schools/districts can provide opportunities for new athletes, coaches, and volunteers. Increased access to funding and facilities might also be possible.
- Community-based teams offer opportunities for athletes to engage in Special Olympics beyond school age, and can draw in new participants in all roles so that our mission can be delivered throughout the life of an athlete or volunteer.

### Enhancing Existing Sports

Consider adding fitness training to the existing Local Program schedule. This approach can improve the fitness and conditioning of your participants and creates healthy habits that extend beyond your sports season.

Additionally, when assessing your existing offerings, keep in mind the ages and developmental stages your Local Program currently offers. When possible, aim to expand these categories so that all ages and abilities can be served.



### Adding Special Olympics Unified Sports® Options to Already Existing Sports

The Local Program can grow by giving volunteers the option of also becoming Unified Sports partners to train and compete alongside Special Olympics athletes.

### Adding New Sports

Athletes, coaches, and families may have interest in new sports beyond what is currently offered. SOGA may have protocols in place for considering new sports. Should your Local Program have the ability to introduce a new sport, consider the following in making an effective decision:

#### *Interest*

- Aside from surveying your Local Program, a sports clinic or demonstration would allow you to introduce basic skills for a new sport and determine the true interest.

#### *Facilities*

- Discuss training and competition options with local recreation centers, schools, and sports organizations to determine available facilities for your Local Program

#### *Coaches*

- Survey your coaches' interests and skills in a new sport and determine if there are additional volunteers or coaches in your community that are capable of a) effectively training in a new sport, and b) helping to avoid overloading your existing coaches and volunteers.
- If your Local Program includes schools, consider offering high school/college athletes the opportunity to coach. Additional interest in coaching may also exist elsewhere in the school community.

#### *Budget*

- Include information in your budget about how much revenue the Local Program will need to sustain and/or grow. Plan out how much fundraising will be required to grow, either through fundraising or donations
- Consult SOGA to confirm the Local Program's budget and that the Program is staying within the parameters of the organization.

**With this information, you now understand the fundamental elements of a Local Program, and the kinds of leaders, roles, and responsibilities that will help you establish and sustain a quality Local Program. Congratulations on taking this important step, and thank you for investing your time and talent in Special Olympics Georgia!**



## Contents

This section of the Local Program Development Guide addresses the following topics and questions:

- Eligibility and Athlete Registration (Page 1)
- Athlete Recruitment (Pages 2-3)
- Athlete Code of Conduct (Page 3)
- Additional Programming for Athletes (Pages 3-5)

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Special Olympics aims to create an inclusive environment for all athletes. But there are required steps to become a Special Olympics athlete. There are also recommended sources for recruiting athletes, and additional opportunities for athletes beyond the playing field.

## Eligibility

Special Olympics training and competition is open to every person with intellectual disabilities who registers to participate in Special Olympics as required by the General Rules. For detailed information regarding eligibility consult SOGA.

### Age Requirement

Individuals are eligible for training and competition at age 8, and there is no upper age limit for participation. Children under age 8 are eligible to participate in the Special Olympics Young Athletes program.

A Local Program may permit children who are at least six years old to participate in age-appropriate Special Olympics training programs, or in specific and age-appropriate cultural or social activities offered during a Special Olympics event. Such children may be recognized for their participation in such training or other non-competitive activities through certificates of participation, or through other types of recognition not associated with participation in Special Olympics competition. No child may participate in a Special Olympics competition (or be awarded medals or ribbons associated with competition) prior to their 8th birthday.

### Identifying a Person with an Intellectual Disability

A person's eligibility in Special Olympics includes assessing the presence of an intellectual disability. Consult SOGA regarding current definitions and guidance on what determines the presence of an intellectual disability.

### Special Olympics Unified Sports®

Unified partners follow a similar registration process as athletes. To become a Unified partner, an individual



must complete an Application for Participation, which includes a Special Olympics Release Form.

## **Athlete Registration**

Athletes must submit an Athlete Medical Form to Special Olympics. This health information form must be signed by a medical professional. Forms must be accessed through SOGA.

Athletes must submit a Special Olympics Release Form (or comparable Special Olympics consent form). Athletes under the age of 18, or who have guardians appointed to them, must have their parent or guardian sign the form. Athletes who are 18 years of age or older without a guardian may sign the Release Form themselves.

## **Athlete Recruitment**

Special Olympics Local Programs are always growing. It's important to reach as many athletes as possible to help maintain growth. Below are several tips to assist with outreach to new and current athletes.

### Create Relationships with Local Groups & Agencies Serving Individuals with Disabilities

- Partner with Parks and Recreation Departments for opportunities to include individuals with intellectual disabilities in their current Programs. Connect links between Special Olympics and Parks and Recreation websites for more information on how to get involved.
- Connect with all agencies and community services – such as group homes – to bring in older athletes or maintain current athlete base as they age out of school.

### Advertise Locally & Utilize Social Media

- Create a Local Program website and social media account(s), according to SOGA's guidance. Use these outlets to promote your Local Program and recruit.
- Advertise upcoming events and include information such as how to join, how to volunteer, and how to donate.

### Target Local Schools

With support from SOGA, introduce the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools<sup>®</sup> strategy, which is a comprehensive model that combines Special Olympics Unified Sports<sup>®</sup>, Inclusive Youth Leadership, and Whole School Engagement to create school and community climates of acceptance and inclusion. This can begin as early as kindergarten with Young Athletes<sup>™</sup>, and continue throughout elementary, middle, and high school with Unified Sports and/or related sports and leadership opportunities. Students, regardless of ability, can serve as volunteers, coaches, and athletes/Unified partners with their Unified Champion School<sup>®</sup> or in your Local Program.

- Work with local independent school districts, Special Education Directors, or Athletic Directors.
- Many colleges also offer programs for students with IDD, and can provide access to athletes and families that may otherwise not have been introduced to Special Olympics.
- Speak at parent meetings and/or teacher professional development days



- Provide Special Olympics and Unified Sports information to students and their families through newsletters and brochures.

### Target Young Athletes

- Partner with local groups that involve people with intellectual disabilities, such as The Arc or your local Down Syndrome Association. Most organizations have space for resources at their offices, on their websites/publications, or at dedicated community events.
- Target inclusive preschools and share information as to how they can incorporate the program during the day and encourage teachers to become coaches.
- Offer a Young Athletes Festival at Local Games and invite the public.
- Incorporate Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® opportunities that begin with a screening.

### **Athlete Code of Conduct**

All athletes, Unified partners, and volunteers (including coaches) must sign a Code of Conduct as part of registration to ensure every participant knows what behaviors are encouraged and which are not permissible in Special Olympics. Check with SOGA to ensure you are using their most current, approved Codes of Conduct.

### **Additional Programming for Athletes**

Once athletes have been recruited, registered, and engaged in your core programming, be mindful of additional opportunities for athletes to experience Special Olympics. Consult SOGA regarding how the following items are delivered, and expectations for your Local Program's role in offering to your athletes.

### Athlete Leadership

Athlete Leadership empowers athletes to develop leadership skills and utilize their voices and abilities to undertake meaningful leadership roles, influence change in the Special Olympics movement, and create inclusive communities around the world. As athletes gain the confidence that comes with achievement on the field of competition, they feel empowered and ready to take on new challenges off the playing field as well, to make use of all their abilities.

There are numerous roles athletes might serve in the Local Program. Some roles require meeting certain criteria as well as going through a series of trainings. A support mentor can assist the athlete to become more successful and have a more meaningful experience.

Athletes can serve Special Olympics as an athlete Leader in many roles such as: Local Program Management Team Member, public speaker, board member, Coach/Assistant Coach, Official, Committee Member, and more!

Consult SOGA about additional opportunities to advance your athlete leaders through their offerings.





### Special Olympics Healthy Athletes®

Special Olympics Healthy Athletes is a Special Olympics program that provides free health screenings and health education in a fun, welcoming environment with a focus on removing the anxiety people with intellectual disabilities often experience when faced with a visit to a medical professional.

Healthy Athletes events are led by licensed medical professionals with the support of additional medical professionals and students going into those fields to give them hands on experience working with people with intellectual disabilities. Consult SOGA regarding existing Healthy Athlete offerings near you.

Current Healthy Athletes disciplines vary by Accredited Program, but could include any or all of the following: Fit Feet, FUNfitness, Healthy Hearing, Health Promotion, MedFest, Opening Eyes, Special Smiles, and Strong Minds. Consult SOGA regarding disciplines offered, and detailed descriptions of each offering.

### Healthy Communities

Healthy Communities is a model Special Olympics Health program addressing the severe health disparities faced by people with intellectual disabilities through immediate and long-term community-based solutions. Healthy Communities is working to increase access to quality health care and prevention programming to improve the health status of people with intellectual disabilities.

### Fitness

Physical fitness is a key part of the Special Olympics mission. Fitness is a lifelong pursuit, requiring the establishment of healthy habits year-round. Members of the Special Olympics community are encouraged to seek optimal health and performance through adequate physical activity, nutrition and hydration.

Special Olympics has endorsed 4 fitness models, all of which have been created for Local Programs to implement: Fit Families & Friends, SOFit, Unified Sports Fitness Clubs, and the Special Olympics Fitness Guide for Schools. SOGA can provide additional information regarding these models, and any available supporting materials.

### Motor Activities Training Program (MATP)

The MATP is specially designed for athletes whose functional abilities preclude their participation in official Special Olympics sports competitions. The MATP incorporates many and varied training activities, which have been developed and tested by experts with practical experience in this field. Accredited Programs are encouraged to offer MATP's within their territories. SOI shall provide Accredited Programs with written guidelines developed and approved by SOI setting forth the training activities and other approved components and procedures for a MATP. Accredited Programs shall conduct their MATP's in accordance with SOI's written guidelines.

### Special Olympics Young Athletes

Young Athletes is a unique sport and play program for children with and without intellectual disabilities between the ages of 0-7. It introduces children to fundamental movement and sports skills in an age and developmentally appropriate format, with a focus on fun and play activities. Young Athletes prepares



children to enter Special Olympics sports training and competition when they reach the appropriate age and stage of development.

*The benefits of the Young Athletes program are numerous and include (but are not limited to):*

- Motor skill development
- Physical fitness
- Social, emotional, and learning skills
- Higher family expectations for the future
- Sports readiness
- Social inclusion and acceptance



## Contents

This section of the Local Program Development Guide addresses the following topics:

- Volunteers (Pages 1-4)
  - Coaches (Pages 4-6)
  - Families and Caregivers (Pages 6-7)
  - Codes of Conduct (Page 7)
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In order to run efficiently, all Local Programs rely on several functions for success. Volunteers, coaches, and families can all play an important role in the health and operations of your Local Program.

## Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of Special Olympics. Your Local Program will thrive as you recruit and meaningfully involve volunteers. This process includes identifying your volunteer needs, locating and recruiting volunteers in your service area, proper registration and training for volunteers, recognizing their contributions, and retraining them.

SOGA has staff supporting volunteer management and can be a helpful resource in growing and maintaining your volunteer base. Additionally, it is recommended to refer to Section 1 of the Local Program Development Guide, for reference regarding Local Program structures and roles referred to below.

### Determining Volunteer Needs

- Develop a list of volunteer roles needed by your Local Program in all categories (Management Team, sports, communications, fundraising, etc.). Be mindful of the skills and time required to do these roles effectively.
- Maintain or create job/position descriptions for volunteer roles, including training duties
- Set firm but reasonable expectations for your volunteers. A sample list of expectations might include:
  - o Complete the required volunteer registration forms and trainings
  - o Fulfill the responsibilities of your assignment
  - o Set a good example for all participants
  - o Model good sportsmanship and behavior
  - o Be continually vigilant and aware of the safety of all participants
  - o Fulfill your commitment to the role, and consider additional training and opportunities offered by Special Olympics that can increase your effectiveness and broaden your volunteerism in the movement.



## Volunteer Recruitment & Engagement

There are a number of steps Local Programs can take in order to increase its volunteer force. Below are suggestions that might enhance your recruitment efforts:

- Appoint a volunteer committee to assist with recruiting and training
- Ensure that all recruitment efforts have a clear message, demonstrate need, and have a follow-up plan. Aim to answer the following questions for volunteers when recruiting them:
  - What is the time commitment?
  - What skills are required?
  - How does the volunteer get in touch if interested?
- Utilize your communication channels (website, social media, newsletters, speaking engagements, local news outlets) to share your needs with the community.
- Utilize your athlete leaders to recruit volunteers
- Create and maintain a list or database with volunteers, both prospective and current
- Meet with volunteers to better understand their interests, and to pair them with the best opportunity in your Local Program
- Follow up promptly with inquiries and new volunteers, to provide outstanding customer service and to confirm their involvement.
- Upon arrival at a Local Program activity, provide training and mentorship to ensure the best possible experience.
- Ensure that thank you letters and acknowledgement opportunities are part of your Local Program efforts, as part of existing activities or by creating a dedicated volunteer appreciation event or campaign.
- Gather feedback from volunteers about their experience, to keep a consistent focus on improvement.

Recruiting volunteers can be done in a variety of ways and can target many groups in your community.

Below is a partial list of target recruitment areas for volunteers:

- Local sports organizations and leagues
- Community volunteer centers
- Sponsors and local businesses, paying special attention to those that offer volunteer hours to employees and/or donations to charities based on hours served by employees
- High schools / colleges (especially those that are Unified Champion Schools)
- Families of athletes
- Service groups



## Volunteer Registration

In compliance with Special Olympics, Inc. policy, all U.S. Programs must register and classify volunteers. The registration procedure and forms are important tools for ensuring the safety and well-being of all athletes and volunteers.

### Class A Volunteers

An individual is a Class A volunteer and must complete a Class A Volunteer registration form if they meet any of the following criteria:

- Has regular close, physical contact with athletes
- Is in positions of authority, trust, or supervision with athletes
- Handles cash or other assets of the Local Program
- Chaperones athletes and may stay overnight or transport athletes

Confirm with SOGA that you have and are using the most current registration form, and that you know the registration process. In addition to the application form, volunteers must present a valid photo ID when the application form is turned in.

All Volunteer Registration Forms must be submitted, and volunteers must be approved by SOGA prior to beginning any Class A Volunteer duties. All volunteers listed as coaches or chaperones or listed on a housing form for competition must have a current, approved Class A Volunteer form on file.

Special Olympics, Inc. requires that all Class A Volunteers complete Special Olympics' safeguarding training PRIOR to commencing any Local Program volunteer activities. If serving as a coach, Concussion Training must also be completed.

All Class A volunteers must undergo a criminal background check. A background check is completed by SOGA using a national vendor. Motor vehicle checks are required for anyone driving at the direction of or on behalf of the organization or if an applicant answers "Yes" to any of the questions regarding suspension or revocation of a driver's license. \*\*

\*\*If under the age of 18, the volunteer does not have to complete a background check until their 18th birthday.

SOGA may make a determination regarding the level of the volunteer's involvement based on the results of the aforementioned background check. SOGA will notify the volunteer and Local Program if they are unable to assist as a Class A Volunteer.

All volunteer registration forms and required training must be renewed every three years.



## Class B Volunteers

Class B Volunteers include volunteers whose role begins and ends the day of an event. Class B Volunteers have more limited contact with athletes (not one-on-one), and do not have any contact with a Program's cash or assets.

While Class B Volunteers have limited contact with athletes, a strict registration protocol must still be followed, in accordance with SOGA's procedure.

- Complete a Class B registration form, either on site or prior to arrival.
- Class B Volunteers must sign in and produce a valid photo ID on the day of the event for which they volunteer.

## Disqualifiers

In order to ensure the safety of Special Olympics athletes, Unified Sports partners, and other participants, Special Olympics is selective with its volunteers. While Special Olympics is committed to a culture of teamwork and inclusion for all, there are disqualifiers for potential volunteers.

*Disqualifiers for Being a Volunteer Include, but are not limited to:*

- A felony arrest / prosecution
- Child abuse, or any role in causing a child's death
- Kidnapping
- Sexual abuse or misconduct
- Neglect of a child or any other individual for whom the potential volunteer has held responsibility
- Arson
- Driving while intoxicated (DWI), driving under the influence (DUI), or comparable offenses; or three or more moving violations within the past three years, disqualifies the volunteer from driving on behalf of Special Olympics for seven years

There are also potential disqualifiers that may be taken into consideration by SOGA, as part of determining volunteer eligibility.

## Coaches

Having a well-trained team of coaches is critical to the success of Special Olympics and Local Programs, as well as ensuring the happiness and development of athletes.

*There are a number of sources for recruiting Special Olympics coaches:*

- Sports organizations
- Sports leagues



- Colleges and universities – including athletic departments, sororities and fraternities, academic departments, and/or residential halls
- Service groups
- Local officials’ associations
- Adaptive Physical Education and Physical Education teachers
- Special Education and General Education teachers
- Coaches (current or former) at the elementary or secondary school level
- College students in Special Education programs
- Current or former Unified Champion Schools or SO College Unified partners
- Special Olympics athlete leaders

### Types of Special Olympics Volunteer Coach Roles

There are several roles for a volunteer who wishes to become involved as a certified Special Olympics Coach. While some coaches may choose to remain a sports volunteer, other coaches may strive to increase their level of certification.

Special Olympics is continually evolving and enhancing its coach education system to meet the needs of volunteer coaches and the athletes they coach. Coach education is available at all levels of knowledge and experience, from entry-level to advanced coaches. SOGA can provide you with detailed information regarding coaching requirements and opportunities available to your Local Program.

### Continuing Education

To maintain certification, a coach must update certifications regularly. Additional coach education is encouraged, and is available in a variety of locations. Here is a partial list of approved sources for training and continuing education:

- Special Olympics Resources: <https://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials>
- Special Olympics Learning Portal: <https://learn.specialolympics.org/>
- National Federation of State High School Associations: <https://nfhslearn.com/>
- Other Special Olympics-approved courses for training and certification might be available. Consult SOGA on any additional third party sources.

### Retaining Coaches

Retaining coaches is critical for maintaining trust and relationships with athletes, Unified partners, volunteers, and families. There are a number of ways to retain coaches and build a stronger Special Olympics community.

- Provide an initial meeting to review coaching role.



- Empower the coach to be the leader of their team.
- Ensure effective communication prior to and throughout the season.
- Offer opportunities for input, including the opportunity to debrief after the season in preparation for the next year.
- Encourage continued education, and provide recognition at every new training and/or level of coach certification.
- Establish your own Coach of the Year Award; submit entry to Special Olympics North America Coach of the Year Program.
- Promote advancement in the movement, such as selection to coach at a National, Regional, or World Games.
- Invite coaches to participate in other events throughout the year.

## Families and Caregivers

Families and caregivers – parents, siblings, and others who play a key role in direct support for athletes – are a vital component of the Special Olympics movement. These individuals engage at various levels of activity and participation within the Local Program, but all can prove valuable to its success.

Communication with, and outreach to, families and caregivers is a key role within the Local Program. When possible, the Local Program should maintain a position on its Management Team *with specific goals of providing opportunities for family involvement. Duties of this role may include:*

- Keep regular contact with families directly, and coordinate with communications team for additional outreach through their channels. A family newsletter could be a consideration as part of the communications strategy.
- Create a welcome letter for new athletes and their families, which includes opportunities for families and caregivers to volunteer with the Local Program.
- Host meetings and events dedicated to families and caregivers, such as:
  - A new family orientation session.
  - Hospitality events for family networking, and to gather contact information from participants.
  - Annual, quarterly, or sport-season gatherings highlighting upcoming and/or recently completed sports seasons.
  - Regular meetings to get feedback.

Engaging families in any of the diverse roles in Special Olympics will strengthen your Local Program. Visit the Special Olympics Resources page on families to explore ways to actively engage athletes' families and caregivers: <https://www.specialolympics.org/our-work/families>





## Working with Agency/Provider Staff

Some athletes who participate in Special Olympics may live in group homes or other supported living environments and/or may be assisted by trained support staff. Turnover of group homes staff members is quite high for a variety of reasons, and you may find challenges communicating with staff. Local Programs need to establish the most effective means for communicating with direct care staff, articulating expectations and needs for their support. Some staff may have interest in joining your Local Program as a coach, volunteer, or Unified Sports partner.

## Codes of Conduct

All volunteers (including coaches) must sign a Code of Conduct as part of registration to ensure everyone knows what behaviors are encouraged and which are not permissible in Special Olympics. All family members are also encouraged to sign a Code of Conduct.

Check with SOGA to ensure you are using the most current, approved Codes of Conduct.



## Contents

This section of the Local Program Development Guide addresses the following topics:

- Structuring Local Program Sports Training (Pages 1-3)
- Competition Standards and Leading Practices (Pages 3-6)
- Additional Opportunities (Page 6)
- Sport Training Checklists (Pages 7-8)

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Training and competition take place year-round at all levels. The primary goal of Special Olympics is to provide training and competition opportunities, which are directed by qualified coaches and volunteers. Individuals and teams compete in divisions according to age, gender, and ability.

As a Local Program Coordinator, it is important to understand the basics of sports training and competition. There are factors involved in getting athletes ready for competition and then taking them to competition, in a way that ensures quality, safety, and a positive experience.

*Please note that prior to the beginning of training and attending competition, the following elements should be in place:*

- Registration of the Local Program with SOGA
- Selection of sport(s) for competition
- Athlete medical forms and release forms completed and submitted
- Unified partner and Class A Volunteer form registration forms completed and submitted
- Head and assistant coach(es) trained and certified

Foundational details regarding Special Olympics sports training and competition can be obtained from SOGA.

## Structuring Local Program Sports Training

The following opportunities may be added based on your Local Program's capacity and specific needs, along with endorsement from SOGA.

### Sports Opportunities Offered

Special Olympics offers something for everyone, regardless of age or ability level. Fact sheets, rules, and coaching guides for each sport (official and recognized) are available from SOGA, or by visiting [specialolympics.org](http://specialolympics.org). Most sports offer multiple levels of play, ranging from standard regulation play to individual or team skills offerings.



The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules govern all Special Olympics competitions. Special Olympics has developed these rules based upon International Federation and National Governing Body Rules for each sport.

Consult SOGA regarding sports currently offered to your Local Program, and the time of year recommended for each sport season.

### Locally Popular Sports

Special Olympics may also allow athletes to engage in locally popular sports. SOGA can provide more details regarding its process for assessing and approving new sports. The following general guidance is offered for consideration in this area:

- Locally popular sports may require pre-approval from SOGA and SOI if they have been determined by SOI to be sports that might expose Special Olympics athletes to unreasonable risks to their health or safety.
- No Accredited Program may offer any training or competition in any sport which SOI has classified as a prohibited sport.
- Requests for permission to offer one of these sports must be accompanied by proposed rules and safety standards. SOI has classified the following sports as locally popular sports that require pre-approval:
  - o Combative sports
  - o Martial arts (other than Judo)
  - o Sledding sports
  - o Motor sports
  - o Aerial sports
  - o Shooting
  - o Archery

### **Special Olympics Unified Sports®**

Special Olympics Unified Sports® is an inclusive sports program that includes Special Olympics athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and Unified Sports partners (individuals without intellectual disabilities). Through shared sport training and competition, Unified Sports promotes inclusion for individuals with and without intellectual disabilities.

Unified Sports is identified in Article 1 of the Sports Rules as three inclusive models – Competitive, Player Development, and Recreational. Each of these models reflects a certain style of play and teammate composition, but all must be fully inclusive for participants.

Coaches should consult with SOGA regarding what Unified Sports models are offered and at which events. It is also important to know that some Programs may use different terms in naming the three models or styles of play.



### Unified Sports Competitive Style

- All athletes and partners must have sport-specific skills and tactics to compete without modification of rules.
- Teams in this model may be eligible for advancement to Regional and World Games.
- Athletes and Unified partners in team sports must be of similar age and ability.
- Athletes and Unified partners in sports, such as golf, may have a greater variance in age and ability.

### Unified Sports Player Development Style

- Athletes and Unified partners are not required to be of similar abilities, but must be of similar ages.
- Teammates of greater abilities serve as mentors to assist teammates of lower abilities in developing sport-specific skills and tactics.
- In certain sports, such as bocce, more age variation is allowed.
- Competition is available at this level.

### Unified Sports Recreation Style

- Consists of inclusive recreational sports opportunities for athletes and Unified partners, or other organizations as introductory one-day events, exhibitions, or demonstrations.
- There is no prescribed training, competition, and/or team composition requirements.
- Opportunities may take place in partnership with schools, sports clubs, and/or community programs.
- Physical education class activities and intramural sports may also fall into this category.

## Virtual and At-Home Programming

In addition to in-person training and competition, additional opportunities are available for athletes to support healthy lifestyles using technology and/or in the comfort of their own homes. Consult SOGA for recommended virtual and home-based training suggestions, both through Special Olympics and other trusted sources.

## Competition Standards and Leading Practices

The minimum standards for athletes desiring to compete in Special Olympics are based on Special Olympics Inc. Sports Rules. All athletes must be trained in the sport before competing. Part of this training may include nutrition education and physical conditioning. Eight consecutive weeks are mandatory.

In addition to training, your Local Program might also take part in organizing and delivering competitions within your service area. SOGA will provide guidance regarding your responsibilities in this area, and any expected standards or processes for doing so.

## Levels of Competition

Athletes of all ability levels have an opportunity to advance to the next higher-level competition provided the sport and event are offered at the next level, from sub-Program Games to World Games.



## Divisioning

The fundamental difference between Special Olympics competitions and those of other sports organizations is that athletes of all ability levels are encouraged to participate, and every athlete is recognized for his/her performance. Competitions are structured so that athletes compete with other athletes of similar ability in equitable divisions.

Divisioning is a multiple-stage process of matching athletes for competition based on their gender, age, and competitive ability level:

- Before each competition, a time, score or skill assessment is submitted for each athlete or team. For events that are not timed or measured, such as football and badminton, there is a series of short games between athletes or teams or an assessment of each athlete or team's ability by a committee.
- The divisions are then set up based on the information on each athlete's skill level so that each set of competitors is closely matched. Divisions can then be modified at advanced levels based on the results of preceding competitions.

SOGA can provide more detail about divisioning, and how your Local Program can support a thorough, consistent divisioning process for its competitions.



## Age Requirements

SOGA may offer age-appropriate Special Olympics Sport training for children from six years old. Children aged six and seven years old may also include local, modified, age-appropriate competition. This means that there are not official results (scores, place of finish, or standings) and participants aren't to attend overnight events.

Children aged eight and above are eligible to participate in competition with official results and be awarded with medals and ribbons recognizing their place of finish.

There is no maximum age limitation for participation in Special Olympics.

## Criteria for Advancement

SOGA can provide details regarding any criteria for advancing to higher levels of competition, including any quotas that might exist. Any such criteria and procedures apply to both individual and team sports, including Unified Sports<sup>®</sup>, and should be made known to athletes, families, and volunteers.

## Games Management System (GMS)

Accredited Programs use a Games Management System (GMS) to maintain data on all athletes. This system is essential to athlete registration, and often to the divisioning process. SOGA staff is available to outline expected processes and procedures by Local Programs, and to provide any necessary training.

## Sports and Competition Safety

Ensure the safety of your athletes, Unified Sports partners, coaches, volunteers, and fans by always promoting health and safety during sports training and competition.

### During Practice Sessions and at Competitions

- Conduct a safety walkthrough of facilities before each training season or competition.
- Always have a basic first aid kit available at every practice and competition.
- Always have athletes' medicals available at practices and competition. Be sure to protect the privacy of this information and note where these forms go at the end of the season.
- Establish a simple protocol in case of an accident or other incident. Provide all coaches with the most up-to-date and accurate emergency contact information for athletes, Unified Sports partners, and volunteers.
- Follow SOGA's crisis communication plan that includes who to contact, and what to do.
- Ensure that there is at least a 4:1 ratio of athletes to coach to provide proper supervision (3:1 ratio for Winter Sports).
- Be sure to establish that a coach can contact the Local Program Coordinator in case of an incident.
- Provide coaches with the number and location of the nearest emergency services.



## Additional Opportunities

In addition to traditional sports training and competition, Special Olympics provides a variety of related opportunities for athletes of all abilities. Section 2 of the Local Program Development Guide addresses additional methods your Local Program might deliver the mission to your athletes.



# Sport Training Checklists

## **Logistics**

- Facilities arranged and evaluated for safety and accessibility
- Equipment procured and prepared
- Length of practice
- Time of day for practice
- Availability of coaches and volunteers
- Communication of dates and times to athletes
- Documentation of scores or assessments

## **Athletes**

- Number involved
- Age level and maturity
- Skill level
- Adjusting for different skill levels
- Preparedness for potential injuries

## **Safety**

- Practice conditions
- Water available
- Weather Conditions
- Hazard-free playing surface
- Equipment in proper condition
- Emergency procedures
- Medical forms on site

## **Delivery of Instruction**

- Key points
- Teaching methods
- Position of athletes: Not facing the sun, athlete needs such as hearing or vision, etc.
- Delegation of volunteers and assistant coaches
- Intervention for behavior or crisis
- Positive feedback and support
- Progression throughout the session:
  - Easy to difficult
  - Slow to fast





### ***Organization of Practice***

- Warm-ups (body and skills)
- Review previously taught skills
- Introduce new skills
- Game or event situation; competitive experience
- Cool down and team talk
- Cell phone numbers of chaperones and coaches
- Emergency contact information for chaperones and coaches

### ***Other***

- Communication with parents, coaches, and event staff
- Coordination with Special Events



## Contents

This section of the Local Program Development Guide addresses the following topics:

- Internal Communications (Pages 1-2)
  - External Communications (Pages 3-5)
  - Crisis Communications (Page 5)
  - Branding and Language Guidance (Pages 6-12)
- 

For success to occur with all stakeholders, the Local Program needs to communicate often, and in a variety of ways. This section of the Local Program Development Guide addresses recommendations for internal and external communication, as well as branding and language guidance commonly sought by Local Programs.

## Internal Communications

### Who is your internal audience?

- Local Program leadership (Leadership team, head coach/coaches)
- Athletes / Unified partners
- Families
- Coaches
- Volunteers

### What do you need to communicate?

- Awareness of Special Olympics – Our mission, how to engage with us, news about Local Program activities
- Practice and meeting schedules
- Competition dates
- Fundraising activities
- Training opportunities for athletes and coaches
- Travel details
- Volunteer opportunities for athletes, Unified partners, coaches, and other Local Program roles



### When do you communicate?

It is important to communicate on a regular basis, even when something is not immediately upcoming.

**Weekly communication is highly recommended.** For example: “We will start training for Winter Games in six weeks; look for the specific practice schedule to be out by \_\_\_\_.”

When there may not be upcoming events, consider communicating less frequently. Bi-weekly or monthly communication may be more appropriate at these times.

### How do you communicate?

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

Common communication approaches used by Local Programs include:

- Email
- Text messaging
- Newsletters (print and/or digital)
- Private/moderated social media\* groups with member/access control
- Website
- Phone calls

\*Be mindful of the content posted on social media. Some information is only appropriate for an internal audience, and not for the general public. Further guidance is included later in this guide regarding social media usage.

### Reminders:

- Keep all lists current! Be sure to add new athletes, families, and volunteers when they join a Local Program. Delete those who are inactive.
- Keep your communication lively to encourage engagement. Remember your ABCs: Audience Based Communications! Put yourself in the shoes of the recipient of your communication – make it clear, easy to read and understand, include all necessary details, and avoid jargon or acronyms that aren’t widely / universally known.
- Always maintain a professional tone in your communications — remember that you are representing Special Olympics.
- All official Special Olympics communications between participants (example: coach and their athletes/team) conducted via email, text, or social media should always aspire to be “observable and interruptible.” In other words, communications should never be one-on-one, to help protect everyone involved. Examples:
  - Text exchanges should be group texts including the whole team, whole coaching staff, etc.
  - Respond to SO-related practice or event questions from athletes/Unified partners on the team Facebook page, or in a group text.



## External Communications

### Who is your external audience?

- All internal audience members
- Partners
- Community leaders
- Prospective athletes, volunteers, and donors – your community!

### What do you need to communicate with followers and the general public?

- Awareness of Special Olympics – Our mission, how to engage with us, news about Local Program activities
- Program news, upcoming events/activities, and ways to engage
- Achievements, milestones, and good news
- Athlete, coach, volunteer, and family profiles
- Volunteer opportunities
- Ways to support the Local Program financially – including donations, special events, and fundraisers

### How to communicate with fans, followers, and the general public?

- Social media
- Website
- Newsletters (print and/or digital)
- Emails
- Printed collateral – including fact sheets, brochures, posters, and flyers
- Town halls (in-person and/or virtual)

### Who is doing the talking?

Each Local Program should select a spokesperson, or a very small group of public representatives, that are qualified and prepared to speak to the media or public about Special Olympics. Be sure to engage athlete leaders trained as public spokespeople.

All individuals speaking to the media or public should maintain clear, consistent messaging about the Local Program.

### What coverage to expect from local media:

- Overall education/awareness about the Local Program, including its needs and activities
- Upcoming competitions
- Results from competitions
- Athletes and/or coach profiles
- Volunteer recruitment needs
- Assistance with fundraising activities



### Using Special Olympics Letterhead

For communications on behalf of Special Olympics and/or the Local Program, such as letters to the community and/or donation requests, you may need to use Special Olympics letterhead. Contact SOGA for an approved template to be used by Local Programs.

## Social Media

Social media can be a powerful and cost-effective way to reach a broad audience. At the same time, it is important to be mindful of how social media is used, and the effects that social media can have on your Local Program.

### Social Media Policy

It is important to have guidelines when using social media within the Local Program. Discuss this with SOGA to obtain their policy. Share this information with all Local Program athletes, coaches, families, and volunteers.

### Leading Practices for Managing Social Media on Behalf of Special Olympics

Verify SOGA's policies/protocols regarding the ability (or not) for Local Programs to create social media accounts. This verification would also apply to creating websites/URLs.

You should only make a social media account in the name of a Special Olympics Local Program with prior approval and guidance from SOGA, following their social media, digital media and website protocols.

- This includes policies and guidance pertaining to using the likeness of participants (photos, images, voice, etc.)
- Use the Special Olympics logo in accordance with branding guidelines set forth in the SOI Branding Standards online: <https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/brand-awareness-and-communication/branding/brand-guidelines/Brand-Identity-Guidelines-2018.pdf>
- Do not publish confidential or personally identifying information about Special Olympics athletes, staff, volunteers, families, community partners or sponsors.
- Be mindful of copyright and intellectual property rights of others and of Special Olympics. Individual bloggers and webmasters may be held accountable for the information that they publish on their sites if it is illegal, defamatory, copyrighted, etc.
- If someone asks you a question outside of your expertise, direct the person to the proper resource. Do not act as a spokesperson. Refer such requests and questions to SOGA.
- At no point should Special Olympics accounts ever be used for the purpose of expressing personal or political beliefs or opinions. Keep your personal views separate.
- Do not use the Special Olympics name or logo to promote or endorse any product, religion, cause, political party, or candidate.
- Per the Special Olympics General Rules, do not allow the Special Olympics name or logo to be used in conjunction with alcohol, vaping, or cannabis-based product companies. Certain provisions also apply to firearms. Consult SOGA for guidance.



- Avoid arguments and confrontations online. If you see a comment that would warrant an official response from Special Olympics, contact SOGA.

### General Social Media Guidelines

- While complete privacy does not exist in the world of social media, almost every social media platform has privacy settings that can help protect your privacy.
- Your personal and professional life could overlap when what is shared becomes part of the public domain and may reflect on the author personally and/or professionally. Remember, even after being deleted, comments and posts continue to live online in archival systems.
- Delete any profane or derogatory comments on your personal social media pages. Always report posts that you feel are threatening, harassing, or inappropriate.
- Respecting the privacy of others is incredibly important when using social media. Do not publish or tag photos of others without their permission. Avoid publishing someone's last name, school, or place of employment on social media if you do not have their permission. It is important to note that what you publish may be subject to public disclosure in legal proceedings.
- Avoid conflicts of interest and maintain a distinction between your personal identity and the identity you represent on behalf of Special Olympics.
- Do not comment anonymously, conceal, or misrepresent your identity in your online activities.
- When instances of misinformation occur in social media posts or comments, respond with facts and data.
- Monitor your social media accounts on a daily basis to look for inappropriate posts and to respond to questions and comments as needed – remember, social media is a dialogue, not a one-way communication.

## Crisis Communications

A crisis is a situation that demands immediate attention and response from Special Olympics. A crisis could be operational in nature, stemming from an issue or incident that causes harm to a participant, disrupts events, or causes damage to a physical location. A crisis can also put the reputation of Special Olympics at risk, causing people to perceive the organization poorly.

Local Programs are advised to be familiar with crisis communication plans issued by SOGA. In general, the following guidance is offered for crisis situations:

- For Medical, Fire, or Police Emergencies: call 911 first, then immediately call SOGA's President & CEO and/or Crisis Communication lead (often the Marketing and Communications Director).
- For a crisis not requiring immediate attention from local authorities, begin by contacting SOGA's President & CEO and/or Crisis Communication lead (often the Marketing and Communications Director).



## Branding & Language Guidance

As our core visual identity, all Local and Accredited Programs must make every effort to ensure the Special Olympics logo and brand are used properly, internally, externally, and by third parties, like vendors, partners, and media.

Special Olympics has extensive branding guidelines, including sub-Program guidelines, that are available online: <https://resources.specialolympics.org/marketing-and-communications/special-olympics-brand>

### Key Logo Usage Guidance

The following information is important to keep top of mind when using the Special Olympics logo. If you have any questions about using the Special Olympics logo, please reach out to SOGA.

- The logo should not appear in colors other than red, black, white, or gray.
- The logo should be placed on a solid background that provides the maximum contrast possible, so the logo is clearly visible.
- Nothing should be added to, removed from, or adjusted in the logo.
- The symbol (round circle) cannot be used on its own and must always be used together with the text.

### Using “Olympics” and Other IOC Elements

Through a Protocol of Agreement signed on February 15, 1988, the International Olympic Committee (the IOC) officially recognized SOI and agreed to cooperate with SOI as a representative of the interests of athletes with intellectual disabilities. The IOC's formal recognition of SOI carries with it a solemn duty and responsibility, which must be discharged by SOI and all of its Accredited Programs, to conduct Special Olympics training and competition in accordance with the highest ideals of the international Olympic movement, to guard and protect the use of the term "Special Olympics," and to protect the word "Olympics" from unauthorized use or exploitation. **The IOC's Protocol of Agreement with SOI prohibits SOI, Programs, and GOCs/LOCs from using the five ring Olympic logo, the Olympic anthem, or the Olympics motto.** Each Accredited Program agrees to fulfill these responsibilities by accepting accreditation from SOI, as provided in its Accreditation License and Article 6 of the General Rules.

### Uniforms

Your Local Program may be responsible for ordering and creating uniforms. Consult SOGA regarding your specific responsibility in this area, and its specific procedures for uniforms and equipment. If you proceed in ordering uniforms for your Local Program, the following information may be useful.



### Commercial Messages on Athlete Uniforms and Competition Numbers

To avoid commercial exploitation of persons with intellectual disabilities – per the Special Olympics, Inc. General Rules – no uniforms, bibs, or other signs bearing competition numbers worn by Special Olympics athletes and Unified partners 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 marking of the manufacturer.

In terms of Special Olympics uniforms, “normal commercial markings” are limited to::

- On larger clothing items – such as shirts, jackets, pants, jerseys, and sweatshirts – one logo or commercial name per clothing item is permitted if that name or display does not exceed an area of 6 square inches or about 39 square centimeters (such as a display measuring 2” x 3” of 5.08 cm X 7.62 cm):
  - o Please note that, in addition to commercial messages, each sport may have specific guidelines to the size and location of numbers and team names as indicated by each National Governing Body.
- On small clothing items – such as caps, socks, hats, gloves, and belts – one logo or commercial name per clothing item is permitted if that name or display does not exceed an area of 3 square inches in 19.35 square centimeters.
- On athletic shoes, no logos or commercial names are permitted except for the brand name and logo included by the shoe manufacturer when issued to the general public.
- Please consult pages 82-85 of the Special Olympics Branding Standards (<https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/brand-awareness-and-communication/branding/brand-guidelines/Brand-Identity-Guidelines-2018.pdf>) prior to ordering uniforms. It is strongly recommended that you contact SOGA for guidance and/or to review artwork prior to ordering uniforms.





## Special Olympics sub-Program Visual Identity Guidelines

### Proper representation of a sub-Program

#### **B** Team Representation

Examples of how to properly represent a team through their team lock-up mark.



SpecialOlympics.org Special Olympics Sub-Program Visual Identity Guidelines / December 2012

#### Branding for Team Uniforms and T-Shirts

Athlete T-shirts and/or uniforms should not carry any sponsorship branding. They can, however, be branded with the Special Olympics logo.

#### Lockup for sub-Programs, Clubs, or Teams

When creating shirts for sub-Programs, clubs, or teams, a lockup can be used that gives priority to the actual team name. This acknowledges the importance of local teams within Special Olympics, Inc. and facilitates the creation of distinct team identities for games within a program.

Above and below are examples of the Special Olympics brand in action with examples of lockups for sub-Programs, clubs, or teams.



## Branding for Volunteer Apparel

In addition to banners and signs, logos on volunteer t-shirts are an appropriate and approved way to recognize local sponsors. Sponsor logos could be placed on the sleeves and/or the back of the shirt. The Special Olympics brand should only appear on the front of the shirt.

**Brand in action**      **T-shirts**  
Lock-up for sub-programs, clubs or teams

**1** When creating shirts for sub-programs, clubs or teams, a lock-up can be used that gives primacy to the actual team name. This acknowledges the importance of local teams within Special Olympics and facilitates the creation of distinct team identities for games within a program.

**1** The name of the team has primacy on the shirt ensuring team or club recognition between competing teams. The choice of typeface and design of this element is at the discretion of the program.

**2** The name of the Accredited Program to which the sub-program, team or club is affiliated is set in all capitals Ubuntu Bold as illustrated here.

**3** The Special Olympics symbol is centred beneath the program name.

**4** The color, typestyle or motif created for each team reflects the local identity of the club or team while clearly identifying the club or team as being within the Special Olympics Accredited Program.

Sub-program / Team / Club  
*Local expression*

1 CLUB/TEAM NAME

2 SPECIAL OLYMPICS PROGRAM NAME

3

Program  
*Standardized*

MERCER COUNTY  
SPECIAL OLYMPICS  
NEW JERSEY

AREA 24  
SPECIAL OLYMPICS  
NEW HAMPSHIRE

LEINSTER  
SPECIAL OLYMPICS  
IRELAND

CITY OF YORK  
SPECIAL OLYMPICS  
GREAT BRITAIN

## Language Guidelines

It is critical that appropriate terminology is used when speaking about a Local Program. This helps to educate the public while reinforcing the organization's brand. Below are documents that outline commonly used terms and acronyms in our movement, and recommended ways to refer to elements of Special Olympics and those we serve:

- [Special Olympics Language Guidelines](#)
- [Special Olympics Intellectual Disability Terminology Guidelines](#)



## Glossary of Commonly Used Special Olympics Terms

- **Accreditation:** Method of assuring that every Program meets the essential core requirements of the Special Olympics mission, as well as certain management and financial requirements. Accreditation grants the Program the legal right to use the Special Olympics name, logo, and other trademarks within its jurisdiction to conduct Special Olympics sports and related activities, and to raise funds under the Special Olympics name.
- **Area / Local / Sub-Program Games:** Preliminary competitions that take place before SOGA events. These serve as additional competitive opportunities for athletes, as well as provide information that is used to ensure that athletes have an opportunity to compete at an appropriate level according to their ability.
- **Athlete:** A person who is identified as having an intellectual disability who is at least 8 years of age and registers to participate in accordance with the SOI General Rules. This individual trains in an Official Sport or Recognized Sport for a minimum of eight weeks or longer during the calendar year and competes in local, state, or Program Special Olympics competitions, or participates in a Motor Activities Training Program. Children under age eight can participate in Young Athletes.
- **Athlete Leadership Council:** A committee comprised of athletes whose purpose is to facilitate discussion among athletes and pass along their suggestions to improve their respective Program.
- **Athlete Medical Form:** Contains pertinent athlete information, including emergency contacts and medical conditions. This form must be completed by a medical examiner before participation in Special Olympics. This form is also known as the Participation Form, and is due every three years unless otherwise stated by SOGA.
- **Athlete Release Form:** Each athlete is required to submit a consent form to participate in Special Olympics.
- **Class A Volunteer:** Any person who volunteers for Special Olympics Georgia Program as a coach, chaperone, driver, overnight host, Unified Sports® partner, or otherwise in a manner that results in regular close contact with Special Olympics athletes. Class A Volunteers also include those who may assume administrative or financial duties such as Committee Members, Event Directors, or Board Members.
- **Class B Volunteer:** Any person who volunteers at a single event; one-day, or walk-on volunteers who do not have direct responsibility or close ongoing contact with athletes.
- **Coach:** Individual charged with training athletes in a specific sport.
- **Division:** The competitive grouping of three to eight athletes in a particular sport based on age, gender, and ability level.
- **Global Messenger:** Athlete ambassadors who foster awareness and advocacy for the Special Olympics movement. Athletes must complete a training program in communications, speech writing, and presentations along with their local speech coach.



- **Special Olympics Healthy Athletes®:** Special Olympics Healthy Athletes®, made possible by the Golisano Foundation, and in the United States in collaboration with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is a program dedicated to providing health services and education to Special Olympics athletes, and changing the way health systems interact with people with intellectual disabilities.
- **Local Program:** The Local Program is the direct service unit for athletes and their family members within SOGA. The Local Program engages with the public to provide sports training, competition opportunities, and related activities while creating inclusive communities. A Local Program is the grassroots level of the Special Olympics movement, and may originate out of existing independent Special Olympics clubs, public or specialized schools, colleges or universities, independent living facilities, Parks and Recreation Departments, adult service providers, professional sports clubs, geographic communities, counties, or other training groups that include registered Special Olympics athletes.
- **Medical:** See “Athlete Medical Form”
- **SOI General Rules:** The Special Olympics, Inc. (SOI) General Rules provide the rules and guidelines for all activities and bind participants (including Local Coordinators) to the Special Olympics purpose, mission, and goals.
- **Staging:** The area where athletes convene as they prepare for competition and awards. This is used to ensure that athletes are placed into the correct competitive divisions.
- **Time Trials:** An event run at the same location as the competition for establishing scores to division athletes for final competition.
- **Special Olympics Unified Sports®:** An inclusive sports program that combines approximately equal numbers of teammates with and without intellectual disabilities on sports teams for training and competition.
- **Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools®:** Unified Champion Schools create social inclusion in schools by building on Special Olympics’ values, principles, practices, and experiences. This programming strives to incorporate three components in schools: Unified Sports®, inclusive student leadership and whole school engagement.
- **Unified Sports® partner:** A person without an intellectual disability who trains in a Special Olympics sport and who competes as a teammate.

### Common Special Olympics Acronyms

- **BOD:** Board of Directors
- **DD:** Developmental Disability
- **GMS:** Games Management Software
- **GMT:** Games Management Team
- **HOD:** Head of Delegation
- **ID:** Intellectual Disability



- **IYL:** Inclusive Youth Leadership
- **LETR®:** Law Enforcement Torch Run® for Special Olympics
- **LMT:** Local Management Team
- **LOC:** Local Organizing Committee
- **MATP:** Motor Activities Training Program
- **NGB:** National Governing Body
- **SMT:** Sports Management Team
- **SOGA:** Special Olympics Georgia
- **SONA:** Special Olympics North America
- **UCS:** Unified Champion Schools®
- **YAC:** Youth Activation Council
- **YA:** Special Olympics Young Athletes
- **YLE:** Youth Leadership Experience



## Contents

This section of the Local Program Development Guide addresses the following topics and questions:

- General Fundraising Guidance (Pages 1-2)
- Fundraising Event Guidance (Page 2)
- Partnerships (Pages 3-5)

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Fans and funds are the fuel that service the mission of Special Olympics, especially as Special Olympics is offered at no cost to the participant. How funds are raised and managed are important responsibilities of the Local and Accredited Program. A few examples of some of the established Special Olympics fundraising events that Local Programs could take part in are the Law Enforcement Torch Run<sup>®</sup>, Polar Plunge<sup>®</sup>, Plane Pull<sup>®</sup>, and consumer-facing campaigns by promoted partners of your Accredited Program.

Local Programs fundraise to create sustainable programs and ensure quality growth. Prior to engaging in fundraising, contact SOGA's fundraising / development staff. They will guide you through the fundraising policies and procedures, as well as provide ideas and strategies to ensure success.

There are many ways to raise funds. Deciding what is in the Local Program's best interest should be examined closely with the SOGA office. Some common ways to raise funds include:

- Sponsorships/Partnerships
- Grants
- Employee match programs
- Special events (e.g. auctions, concessions, dinners, galas, walk-a-thons, etc.)
- Participating in shared revenue opportunities conducted by SOGA.

## General Fundraising Guidance

The following information applies to all forms of fundraising:

- All volunteers who handle large sums of money are required to register as Class A Volunteers.
- Be aware of fundraising restrictions. Collaborate with SOGA's Development Director before soliciting, especially when seeking corporate support. Making multiple asks may aggravate or confuse donors, whether prospects or current donors.
- Fundraising is done to support Local Program teams. Fundraising for a particular athlete – unless approved by the SOGA office – is strictly prohibited.
- All contractual agreements that address liability require approval by the SOGA office for them to be considered binding.



- All funds raised by a Local Program must be deposited into the authorized Special Olympics Georgia account within five (5) business days of the donation.
- Funds should be sent by check or money order. **Do not mail cash.** Cash may be hand-delivered to the SOGA office. Always request a receipt for cash.
- Value-in-kind donations should be documented with a receipt to the donor. Your SOGA office will have forms that can be utilized.
- Consider participating in fundraisers already established by your SOGA office. Leveraging established SOGA fundraisers tend to be more cost-effective and successful than conducting a new event.
- Fundraisers may serve several purposes. Identify the purpose and match the amount of effort that will go into it based on its purpose. For example:
  - o A car wash can bring in great awareness; however, the amount of money it raises may be limited.
  - o Likewise, make sure costs are considered. A common fundraising standard is that any fundraising effort return at least 3-4 times the investment – in other words, if you invest \$100 on a fundraiser, it should raise at least \$300-400.

## Fundraising Event Guidance

When organizing a fundraising event, the following steps are advised:

- Fundraising events are not allowed to have any direct affiliation with tobacco, vaping, cannabis-based, or alcohol products. Consult your SOGA staff for additional guidance.
- Before you can begin organizing a fundraising event, SOGA requires completion of a fundraising approval form. Any such form will ask for basic information about the event and might require a simple expense and revenue budget.
- Build a fundraising event plan which includes identifying the overall fundraising objective – including setting a goal for how much you want to raise (gross and net after expenses) – and a timeline for tasks to be completed (what and when).
- Successful fundraising – particularly special event fundraisers – requires a group of volunteers assigned to specific tasks. Assign manageable duties to others, train as necessary, monitor progress frequently, make timely adjustments, and have fun!
- Detailed record keeping is crucial to your fundraising efforts. Make sure that all expenditures reconcile with bills and receipts, and that all revenue reconciles with items sold (such as auction items, raffle tickets, etc.) Use forms provided by the SOGA office to track expenses and revenue.
- Following a fundraiser, be sure that all supporters and sponsors have been thanked for their contributions. Thank you letter templates and stationery may be available from the SOGA office. Certificates or plaques may be appropriate depending on the circumstances.
- Take time to conduct a post event evaluation as part of a successful fundraising event. In addition, maintain records that will be helpful for future events such as donor/participant contact info, items and amounts donated, and files that outline your previous tasks and communication.



## Partnerships

Local Programs should forge partnerships in their communities. The following information is provided to help you get started with creating your own partnerships with sponsors, volunteers, clubs and organizations, athletes, and others in your community.

### Prospecting and Networking

A partner begins as a prospect – a person, school, business, or organization that you want to have a deeper relationship with your Local Program. There are many prospects in your community, and many are closer at hand than you might think. These prospects become part of your Local Program’s network of community contacts, to share future opportunities and general communication.

#### Potential prospects

Prospects generally come from two tiers of contacts: those who are already aligned with your Local Program or with Special Olympics, and those who “should be”. In either case, here are a few suggestions of who to find, and where to find them.

- Start internally with your leadership, your athletes, and their families. Where do they work? What clubs, organizations, service clubs, or places of worship do they belong? Who are the most influential people they know?
- The Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) is a significant partnership within our movement. Consult with SOGA regarding LETR agencies near you, any existing efforts led by LETR in your community, and how to best engage this partnership on behalf of your Local Program.
- What are the most prominent companies in your community? Many focus on areas that align with Special Olympics such as health and wellness, or supporters of youth and school sports. Others might be frequent community donors during special occasions such as festivals or holidays.
- Confirm if a prospect is the decision maker for their organization. Often you will encounter a “gatekeeper” that stands between you and the decision maker. Develop your relationship with the decision maker whenever possible!
- Use the Special Olympics Resource Toolkit to learn about research and facts that might also be helpful in finding and cultivating prospects:  
<https://resources.specialolympics.org/research>

### Successful Approaches to Partner Development

Developing a partnership is all about relationship building. The following guidance can be helpful in overcoming barriers to building partnerships.

#### Starting a Strong Partnership





1. Always listen for opportunities. All interactions provide an opportunity to share the Special Olympics mission.
2. Learn about what matters most to the partner. You already know the partner is valuable to your efforts. If you can take the time to find out how you can also meet their needs, a true partnership can develop. Research when possible who they are and what they do, so you understand their priorities before you meet.
  - a. If this is your first time meeting a potential partner, a common approach to the initial conversation is to talk 20% of the time and listen 80% of the time. Be alert to any information they share that aligns with your needs.
3. Be willing to start small. You may have a grand vision for a partnership, but it may take time to develop. A large partnership might start with a “no” or with a donation of time rather than their resources. Stay persistent, and keep the door open whenever possible!

### Making the Ask

1. Get personal! After brief introductions, be willing to share why Special Olympics matters so much to you and support your “Special Olympics story” with facts about the movement. Passion can be contagious. Use that passion to help them understand why this ask or event is so important.
2. Take a Unified Leadership approach! Our athletes are our greatest success stories and can often make the most compelling and convincing asks for support. Take athletes with you to your meeting, encourage them to share their story, and include them in the process of making the ask.
3. Stay positive! Regardless of the outcome, you are representing Special Olympics and making them more aware of our work. Even if the answer is “no” initially, a positive impression will set a positive tone for your next interaction.
4. Be brave in the attempt! Not every ask will end in “yes”. Follow the example of our athletes and do your best and stay confident that a “no” will get you one step closer to the outcome you want.
5. Have options! Be prepared to pivot the conversation to any number of opportunities to support your Local Program, thinking of the various gifts they could provide:
  - a. Time – Can this partner become a volunteer, as a coach, Unified partner, committee member, or otherwise support with the gift of their time?
  - b. Talent – Does this person (or group) have skills that can help your Local Program? Can they help to make asks or introductions to others? Think about what makes this person successful, and how that could benefit your Local Program.
  - c. Treasure – In addition to their money, what else can they offer that is valuable? Products, gift cards, discounts, proceeds of sales, equipment, venues, etc. – there can be many options to contribute, and most will be very useful.

When you confirm a new supporter, be prepared to deliver (and when possible, over-deliver) on your end of the deal.

- A Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement can outline roles and responsibilities that are clear and easy to follow. Check with SOGA for a sample and ensure that your Program’s approval process is followed.
- Provide information about how, and to whom, they can easily send or submit their contribution.



- Thank the donor early and often. Consider sharing the impact of their gift (example: how much equipment your team can purchase from their support, or how many more athletes can now complete at an event). Also, involve your athletes in the thank you strategy. They are your greatest ambassadors!

### Maintaining the Relationship

Regardless of whether or not you get the support you are seeking, this meeting has now started a relationship. A true partnership goes beyond a single pledge or donation. Consider how you might keep them informed – and potentially more involved – in your Local Program for years to come.

1. Invite the donor to a team practice, an event, or other opportunity to see your athletes in action – and to see what their contribution has made (or could make) possible.
2. Include them in your regular communication with your Local Program, and (if applicable) invite them to follow your Program on social media. Keep your Program on their mind often!
  - a. Remember to brag about the most exciting news happening in your Local Program. Are you headed to a State/National Games? Has an athlete been trained in Athlete Leadership?
3. Beyond mass communication, set up a regular schedule for a meeting, coffee, lunch, or other one-on-one opportunity to connect with your new partner. If an athlete is available to join you, bring him or her along!
4. Think about your next invitation to support what you do. Is it a similar opportunity to donate or volunteer as they've done before, or are you ready to take the relationship to the next level?
5. Remember to talk about the impact that Special Olympics is having in your community, and what they have made possible. Your success will become their very own Special Olympics story, and might compel them to bring another partner to the table.

## Contents

This section of the Local Program Development Guide addresses the following topics:

- Finance (Pages 1-2)
  - Risk Management (Pages 2-4)
  - Sample Resource (Page 5)
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## Finance

Proper financial accounting within a Local Program serves many functions, both for the direct health of your Local Program, and in growing the movement in your service area. It can, among other factors:

- Demonstrate transparency and responsibility to the community about how donor dollars are used;
- Maintains the legal and ethical integrity of Special Olympics' brand, mission, and charitable status; and
- Grow partnerships and trust with our supporters, and directly impact the ability to grow our movement at the grassroots level.

All funds raised in the name of SOGA are the assets of SOGA, including those raised by Local Programs. The following guidance is intended to assist your efforts to manage Local Program finances, in strong partnership with SOGA.

### Oversee & Manage Financial Resources

The following steps should be taken in order to ensure that the Local Program's financial resources are managed appropriately:

- *Identify a Local Program volunteer to manage finances.*  
Recruit someone who is capable of helping with budgeting, managing funds, and reporting finances as required. Notify the SOGA office as to who has been identified for this role.
- *Educate your Local Program about financial procedures.*  
Local Program leadership should be knowledgeable about financial practices and policies in place by SOGA, and should make program participants and volunteers aware of financial procedures that they must follow as part of the Local Program.



## Additional Financial Considerations

Your Local Program's financial lead should be familiar with the following items.

- Banking and accounting practices vary by Accredited Program. It is recommended to meet with SOGA's Chief Financial Officer / Finance Director (or other staff, if directed) to understand policies and expectations regarding:
  - Banking for Local Programs
  - Budgeting and financial reporting requirements
  - Expense reporting and/or reimbursement for Local Program expenses
  - Purchasing, inventory, and disposal of capital equipment, which is generally defined as non-disposable equipment or items valued above a certain threshold (likely \$1000 USD or more)
  - Reporting in-kind donations, whether as part of fundraising efforts or reporting volunteer hours if applicable.
- While athletes are prohibited from being charged to participate in Special Olympics per the General Rules, SOGA may invoice Local Programs for pre-arranged services (such as lodging at State Games). Generally, the SOGA office will invoice Local Programs for such fees, or deduct the invoiced amount from Local Program funds if applicable.
- Local Programs are not permitted to open credit cards, debit cards, lines of credit, or any other financial instrument, or establish endowments.
- Local Programs may not incorporate or establish any legal entities that include the Special Olympics name nor trademark. Local Programs also may not register anything that includes the name or marks of any of its associated brands (Examples: Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics or Polar Plunge).
- In addition to financial policies, Local Programs should be familiar with SOGA's fundraising policies and how they apply to you. Examples of such policies might include:
  - The timeframe in which deposits must be made upon receipt of funds
  - The process in which thank you letters must be sent to all donors.
- Additional resources available from SOGA include:
  - IRS (or equivalent) letters and documentation, which may be needed for securing donations.
  - Tax exempt certificates for purchases, and any guidance on what does or does not qualify.
  - Proof of accreditation by Special Olympics.
  - General financial information from SOGA – such as annual reports or IRS Form 990 – can generally be found on their website, or upon request.

## Risk Management

Conducting sports and other activities inherently involves exposure to a variety of risks to the participants, volunteers and the organization. Some of these risks could negatively impact the people, assets, and/or reputation of Special Olympics and our partners. Effective risk management practices



allow you to minimize the chance of risk to all participants so everyone can enjoy a safe and healthy environment when at Special Olympics. It can also help minimize or avoid incidents that could hinder your ability to operate, or otherwise damage the organization.

## General Risk Management Guidance

Local Programs are advised to be familiar with the following topics and documents and educate Local Program leadership and constituents on an ongoing basis, about the protocols, policies and resources that support effective risk management.

All Local Program leaders – which equates to Class A volunteer leadership – are required to take safeguarding training (i.e. Protective Behaviors or Operation Safeguard) PRIOR to beginning any Class A volunteer duties.

### Incident Reporting

Incident Report Forms are available from SOGA, as well as standard procedures for completion and submission. An Incident Report Form should be completed following all injuries or illnesses at Special Olympics activities.

The Incident Report Form is a factual account and should be free of speculation or hearsay. It is best to leave the determination of potential liability to our insurance claims professionals. Following an injury or illness, forms should be promptly sent to SOGA.

Other types of incidents may include property damage, abuse, theft, or incidents requiring law enforcement. Please immediately contact SOGA for guidance as these matters are not reported via the Incident Report form.

## Insurance

SOGA can provide you with information regarding insurance coverage, and the process for requesting / providing insurance documentation and guidance.

It is strongly recommended to consult SOGA when any of the following apply to your Local Program:

- Requesting and supplying Certificates of Insurance, to practice facilities or other vendors requiring proof of insurance
- Rental of vehicles, such as buses or vans, for transportation of Local Program participants.

## Medical Emergency Considerations:

- Ideally, a physician, an athletic trainer, or a physical therapist knowledgeable in the triage and treatment of athletic injuries should cover practices and games.
- The primary coach for a team must maintain a copy of all athletes' medical forms during practices and games and make forms and any special instructions available to medical personnel if needed.



- The coaching staff should be educated and skilled in immediate management designed to contain the extent of the illness/injury until appropriate medical personnel are available, including but not limited to certification in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid.
- The primary coach responsible for a team is responsible for activating the emergency management plan or protocol. This plan can be adapted from an existing plan (for schools or agencies, for example) to fit your Local Program's needs, and should also align with the policies and procedures of SOGA.

### Crisis Communication Plan

A crisis is a situation that demands immediate attention and response from Special Olympics. A crisis could be operational in nature, stemming from an issue or incident that causes harm to a participant, disrupts events, or causes damage to a physical location. A crisis can also put the reputation of Special Olympics at risk, causing people to perceive the organization poorly.

Local Programs are advised to be familiar with crisis communication plans issued by SOGA. In general, the following guidance is offered for crisis situations:

- For Medical, Fire, or Police Emergencies: call 911 first, then immediately call the SOGA President & CEO and/or Crisis Communication lead (often the Marketing and Communications Director).
- For a crisis not requiring immediate attention from local authorities, begin by contacting the SOGA President & CEO and/or Crisis Communication lead (often the Marketing and Communications Director).

## Resource: Sample Guidance for Inclement Weather

### Rain

Decisions on field closures are made as late as possible in order to give the best possible chance for the game to be played.

### Winter Weather



Players are more susceptible to injuries during cold weather, particularly from pulled or torn muscles. Players should be encouraged to wear appropriate clothing to aid body heat retention, yet afford adequate movement without creating a safety hazard. As a general rule, training programs should consider following their High School Activities Association policies for cancellations.

### Hot Weather

The risk of heat-related illness from vigorous sports activity increases with the temperature. The body generates heat, which cannot be dissipated readily when the ambient temperature exceeds 85°F / 29°C, depending upon the humidity. Hot weather is considered at any point where the heat index reaches or exceeds 90°F / 32°C. As a general rule, proceeding with training or competition should be carefully considered if the heat index at the start of training is projected to be above 95°F / 35°F. Coaches should exercise caution and provide additional water breaks.

### Thunder & Lightning

If inclement weather is forecasted, an individual should be designated to monitor the weather forecast and radar during the competition. If the facility being used for competition has a lightning detection system, and a facilities policy in place that is more stringent than described below, the facilities policy will supersede the Special Olympics policy.

*Example: If lightning is detected within five kilometers / eight miles of practice or competition, all coaches, players, referees, and spectators are to withdraw from the field and seek proper shelter. No place outside is safe near thunderstorms. The best shelter is a large, fully enclosed, substantially constructed building. A vehicle with a solid metal roof and metal sides is a reasonable second choice.*

*30-minute Rule: Wait at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder or the last lightning flash before giving the “all clear” signal and resuming normal activity. If thunder is heard or lightning is seen again within that 30-minute time frame, the event will continue to be postponed or officials may deem to cancel the event.*