

Special Olympics Rhode Island General Orientation (updated in July, 2020)

For Volunteers

Special Olympics
Rhode Island



Welcome to General Orientation



The goals of this orientation are to provide:

- The basic overview of Special Olympics and Special Olympics Rhode Island.
- The history and organizational structure of Special Olympics
- The initiatives, sports offerings and opportunities available to join and support the mission of Special Olympics.

Special Olympics unleashes the transformative power and joy of sports to reveal the full potential of athletes with intellectual disabilities, creating more inclusive communities, everyday around the world.

-- Preamble to the Special Olympics General Rules

Part I – Mission, History, Philosophy & Organizational Structure of Special Olympics

Part II – Special Olympic Athlete, Sports and Initiatives

Part III – Opportunities to Join, Volunteer and Support Special Olympics

Please be sure to take the test at the end of the slideshow to receive your certification!!



Part I – The Mission, History, Philosophy and Organizational Structure of Special Olympics

“Let me win;
but if I cannot win,
let me be brave in the attempt.”
The Special Olympics Athlete Oath

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Mission Statement



To provide year-round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, prepare for entry into school and community programs, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills and friendships with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

Components & Outcomes



| Components | Outcomes |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">Year-roundTraining and CompetitionOlympic-type SportsIndividuals with Intellectual Disabilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Physical FitnessCourage and JoySharing of Gifts and SkillsInclusionFriendship<ul style="list-style-type: none">FamiliesAthletesCommunity |



Founding Principles of Special Olympics

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

- People with intellectual disabilities can, with proper instruction and encouragement, enjoy, learn and benefit from participation in individual and team sports, adapted as necessary to meet the needs of those with special mental and physical limitations.
- Consistent training under the guidance of qualified coaches, with emphasis on physical conditioning, is essential to the development of sports skills, and competition among those of equal abilities is the most appropriate means of testing these skills, measuring progress and providing incentives for personal growth.
- Through sports training and competition: people with intellectual disabilities benefit physically, mentally, socially and spiritually; families are strengthened; and the community at large, both through participation and observation, is united with people with intellectual disabilities in an environment of equality, respect and acceptance.



Founding Principles (cont.)

- Every person with an intellectual disability who meets the eligibility requirements set out in the General Rules should have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the sports training and athletic competition programs offered by Special Olympics.
- Special Olympics must transcend all boundaries of race, gender, religion, national origin, geography, and political philosophy, and offer sports training and competition opportunities to all eligible persons with intellectual disabilities in accordance with uniform worldwide standards.
- Special Olympics celebrates and strives to promote the spirit of sportsmanship and a love of participation in sports for its own sake. To that end, Special Olympics aims to provide every athlete with an opportunity to participate in training and competition events which challenge that athlete to his or her fullest potential, regardless of the athlete's level of ability. Special Olympics therefore requires that Special Olympics Games and Tournaments offer sports and events which are appropriate for athletes of all levels of ability, and in the case of team sports, provide every athlete with an opportunity to play in every game.
- Special Olympics encourages sports training and competition opportunities at the local, area and community level (including schools) as a means of reaching the greatest number of eligible athletes.

Special Olympics is unique from other sports organizations



Special Olympics

- Sports for all ability levels
- Awards for all participants
- “Divisioning” for equitable competition
- Random drawing to National and World Games competitions

Special Olympics’ philosophy does not emphasize “winning at all costs,” but emphasizes the importance of participation, inclusion, effort and personal achievement.

Special Olympics History



June 1962

Eunice Kennedy Shriver begins a summer day camp at her home in Maryland for children with intellectual disabilities to realize their capabilities in sports and physical activities.

July 1968

The first International Special Olympics Summer Games are held at Soldier Field in Chicago, Illinois, USA. 1000 individuals with intellectual disabilities from 26 states and Canada compete in track and field and swimming.

December 1971

The U.S. Olympic Committee gives Special Olympics official approval to use the name 'Olympics' in the United States.

June 1981

The Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics is launched in Wichita, Kansas, USA, after Police Chief Richard LaMunyon saw an urgent need to raise awareness for Special Olympics. The Torch Run is now Special Olympics' largest grassroots fundraiser, raising nearly \$40 million annually.

History (cont.)



July 1997

Healthy Athletes® becomes an official Special Olympics initiative, providing health care services to Special Olympics athletes worldwide. The program includes free vision, hearing and dental screenings; injury prevention clinics and nutrition education.

August 2009

Special Olympics mourns the loss of founder Eunice Kennedy Shriver who died surrounded by her family in Massachusetts. Letters and messages celebrating her contribution to humanity pour in from world leaders and everyday people around the world.

September 2010

The first Eunice Kennedy Shriver Day is held in countries around the world to celebrate the vision of the founder of Special Olympics and to accelerate the momentum of the organization.

January 2011

Special Olympics mourns the death of Sargent Shriver, husband of late founder Eunice Kennedy Shriver and Chairman of the Board Emeritus. Shriver served as president of the Movement from 1984 through 1996 and served as Chairman of the Board of Directors from 1990 to 2003.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE



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 from using the 5 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 5 of the General Rules.

SOI - Special Olympics Inc.

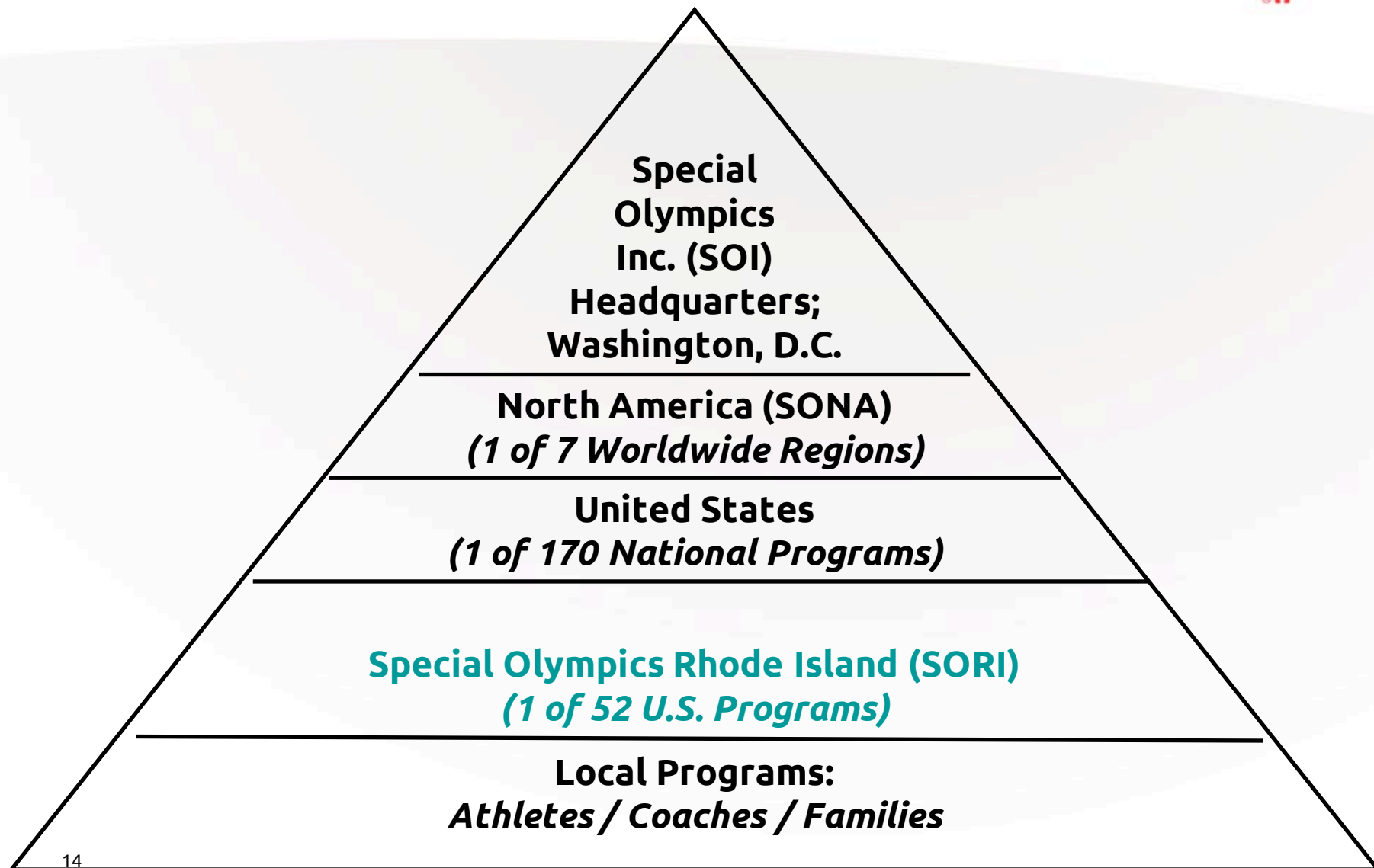


SOI is the international governing body of the Special Olympics Movement, founded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver.

In discharging its responsibilities as the world governing body of Special Olympics, SOI establishes and enforces all official policies and requirements of Special Olympics, oversees the conduct and expansion of Special Olympics accredited programs throughout the world, and provides training, technical assistance and other support to Accredited Programs and GOCs.

SOI is a not-for-profit corporation organized under the laws of the District of Columbia, USA, with its principal office in Washington, D.C., USA.

Organizational Structure – Worldwide



Organizational Structure - Statewide



**SORI
Board of Directors**

**SORI Staff
Headquarters in Smithfield, RI**

**CVS Health Training Center
370 George Washington Highway
Smithfield, RI 02917**

**64 Local Programs:
*Athletes / Coaches / Families***

Local Programs



Special Olympics Rhode Island accredits qualified local programs throughout the state to operate Special Olympics training and competition programs. Local programs register their athletes with SORI, provide coaches and training and bring athletes and teams to competitions.



Facts & Figures (as of July 2020)

- Sport seasons: 4
- Sports offered: 22
- **Annual competitions: 660**
- **Athletes: 4,000**
- **Unified partners: 2,200**
- **Volunteers: 6,400**
- **Coaches: 680**
- **Staff: 11**



Part II – Special Olympics Athletes, Sports & Programs

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Eligibility for Participation in Special Olympics



Every person with an intellectual disability who is at least **eight years of age** is eligible to compete in Special Olympics. There is no maximum age limitation for participation in Special Olympics. The minimum age requirement for participation in Special Olympics competition is eight years of age.

The **Young Athletes** program introduces children, two to seven years old to the world of sports, with the goal of preparing them for Special Olympics sports training and competition.

Identifying Persons with Intellectual disabilities



A person is considered to have an intellectual disability for purposes of determining his or her eligibility to participate in Special Olympics if that person satisfies any one of the following requirements:

- The person has been identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability as determined by their localities;
- or the person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures such as intelligent quotient or "IQ" testing;
- or the person has a closely related developmental disability. A "closely related developmental disability" means having functional limitations in both general learning (such as IQ) and in adaptive skills (such as in recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care).

Real Sport Experience

SORI offers training and competition opportunities in 21 sports. Each sport season requires a minimum of eight weeks of training prior to competing in a season ending tournament.

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Sports and Seasons



Spring

Aquatics
Athletics
Cycling
Fitness
Powerlifting
Motor Activities
Training Program
Ten-Pin Bowling
Unified Soccer
Unified Volleyball
Unified Champions
Schools- Basketball
Young Athletes

Summer

Fitness
Unified Golf
Unified Sailing
Unified Softball
Unified Croquet

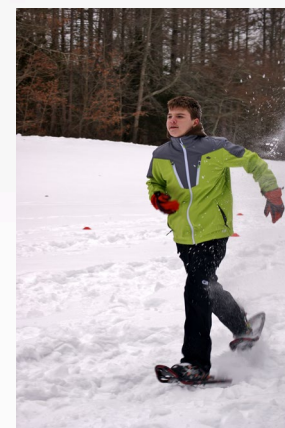


Fall

Fitness
Flag Football
Duck-Pin Bowling
Unified Basketball
Tennis
Soccer
Unified Champion
Schools Cross Country
Unified Champion
Schools- Volleyball
Unified Bocce
Young Athletes

Winter

Alpine Skiing
Basketball
Fitness
Nordic Skiing
Snowboarding
Snowshoeing
SO College Basketball
Unified Bowling



Sports for all ability levels are offered



Motor Activities Training Program (MATP)

Designed for individuals with severe disabilities that cannot benefit from standard Special Olympics training and competition programs.

Example of Range of Events in an individual sport like Track & Field

- Wheelchair Events
- Assisted Walking
- Walking
- Developmental Runs
- Sprints and Runs – 100m thru Marathon
- Throwing events – Tennis ball, softball, shot put, turbo jav
- Pentathlon

Example of Range of Events in a team sport like Basketball

- Basketball Skills
- Unified Sports® Recreational
- Unified Sports® Player Development
- Unified Sports® Competitive
- Traditional

Sports Rules



Special Olympics Sports rules are:

- Based on National Governing Body or International Federation official rules.
- The rules contain few modifications for Special Olympics and are approved by the Special Olympics Sports Rules Committee
- The same rules govern all Special Olympics competitions throughout Rhode Island, the United States and throughout the world – from local competitions to S.O. World Games

Coaches, officials and volunteers show respect to and help the athletes to do their best, improve their sport skill and honor their efforts by calling the rules of the sport and violations as written.

Divisioning for Athletes



To ensure fair and equitable competition, to provide each athlete an opportunity to excel, and as a tool for motivating each athlete to do their personal best, Special Olympics uses a unique process called **“divisioning”**. Divisioning places athletes of similar gender, age and ability together to compete against one and other.

Divisions are ideally comprised of 3 – 8 athletes; are of the same gender and within the same age range. An athlete’s ability is the primary factor in divisioning for competitions. A 15% guideline is used to determine similar ability. The variance between the fastest and the slowest competitors in a division should be no more than 15%; thereby giving all competitors a reasonable opportunity to compete with one and other.

For example: an athlete that runs the 100m dash consistently in 20 seconds would run in a division that the fastest competitor would run no faster than 17 seconds motivating each athlete to do their best. (If an athlete that consistently ran a 30 second 100m and they were lined up to race a competitor that ran a 12 second 100m – they probably wouldn’t feel motivated to do their best for the entire race).

The “Honest Effort” rule states that an athlete may be sanctioned for obtaining a time/distant greater than 15% at a State Tournament.

Divisioning for Teams



Similar to divisioning for individual athletes, divisioning for teams helps to ensure fair and equitable competition, provide each team an opportunity to excel and is a tool for motivating each team to do their best.

Team divisions are ideally comprised of 3 – 8 teams; are of the same gender and within the same age range. The teams ability level is also the primary factor in divisioning for competitions.

Unified Sports®



Special Olympics Unified Sports® began in Massachusetts in the early 1980's. It is recognized globally as an iconic program for social inclusion which activates attitude change and community building through an inclusive sport experience between individuals with and without intellectual disabilities, while broadening the relevance and impact of the Special Olympics movement.



Unified Sports (cont.)



- An inclusive model sport program
- Approximately equal numbers of S.O. athletes and partners without intellectual disabilities as teammates for training and competition
- Athletes & partners: similar age
- 3 Models
 - Unified Sports® Competitive – Athletes and Partners of similar age and ability are teammates in competitive play
 - Unified Sports® Player Development – Teammates of lower ability not ready for competitive play are mentored by teammates of higher ability
 - Unified Sports® Recreation – An introduction to Unified Sports®



Sustaining Athlete Health



The Healthy Athletes Initiative

Since officially launching in 1997 as a Special Olympics program started by Dr. Steve Perlman, a pediatric dentist from Lynn, Massachusetts, Healthy Athletes has grown to provide seven different health screenings — Fit Feet, FUNfitness, Healthy Hearing, Health Promotion, Opening Eyes®, MedFest, Special Smiles® and Strong Minds — with the goal to improve athletes' ability to train and compete. These free health screenings have been implemented globally in more than 90 countries, and nearly 500,000 screenings have been completed since its inception.

The key objectives of Special Olympics Healthy Athletes Initiative are:

- Improve access and health care for Special Olympics athletes at event-based health screenings.
- Make referrals to local health practitioners when appropriate.
- Train health care professionals and students in the health professions about the needs and care of people with intellectual disabilities.
- Collect, analyze and disseminate data on the health status and needs of people with intellectual disabilities.
- Advocate for improved health policies and programs for person with intellectual disabilities

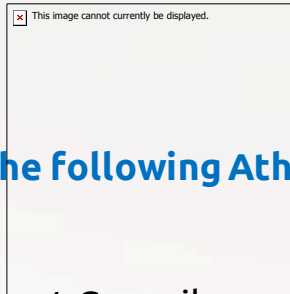
SORI conducts Healthy Athletes screenings at the annual Summer Games.

MedFest is offered in January at the Smithfield office.

Athlete Leadership



Athlete Leadership allows athletes to explore opportunities for Special Olympics participation in roles previously considered “non-traditional.” Such participation might come in the form of an athlete serving on the Board of Directors or local organizing committee; or it might find an athlete as a spokesperson, member of an Athlete Input Council, a team captain, coach or official.



Special Olympics Rhode Island offers the following Athlete Leadership Programs:

- Public Speaking (Global Messengers)
- Athletes on Boards, Committees or Input Councils
- Athletes as Volunteers (games or events)
- Athletes as Coaches or Assistant Coaches
- Athletes as Sport Officials
- Assisting with Fund Raising
- Assisting with technology or other office work





Part III – Opportunities to Join, Volunteer and Support Special Olympics

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What can volunteers do?



- Coach or assist with a team during training.
- Become a Unified partner and participate in team practices and competitions.
- Serve on an event planning committee (event management team) for sporting or fundraising events.
- Volunteer during a tournament or fundraising event.
- Participate in one of our fundraising events.

As a Coach



- Work with a team or individuals during their 8 week training period for approximately 2 hours per week
- Attend tournaments, either one day or overnight, and support the athletes both during competition and throughout the event.
- SORI offers both sports specific training and training on working with Special Olympics athletes
- All coaches must submit a Class A Volunteer Registration form. A national background check is run on all coaches and assistant coaches. They must also complete three other trainings included on our [Coaches Resource page](#)

As a Unified Partner



- Unified Partners are individuals without an intellectual disability who participate in team sports with Special Olympics athletes of similar ability
- Regularly participate in practices. Attend tournaments, either one day or overnight, as a member of a team.
- All Unified Partners aged 16 or over must submit a Class A Volunteer Registration form. A national background check is run on all adult Unified Partners.



On Event Management Team



- Participate in the planning of sports tournaments or fundraising events.
- Attend 3 or 4 meetings during the 6 month planning period prior to the events.
- Assist SORI staff in procuring venues, volunteers, and needed supplies
- During the event, manage other volunteers assigned to venue. Answer general questions regarding event.
- All Event Management Team members must submit a Class A Volunteer Registration form. A national background check is run on all Event Management Team members.

Event Volunteer



- Attend a sports or fund raising event and volunteer for 4 – 8 hours, depending on the venue.
- Assist with registration, timing and scorekeeping, meals distribution, first aid (medical license required), fundraising events, etc.
- Recruit other volunteers from company/school/civic organization.
- First aid volunteers must submit a Class A Volunteer Registration form. A national background check is run on all medical volunteers.



The Special Olympics Movement unlocks the joy of sport to inspire people throughout the world - to open their minds to human giftedness, to accept, include and value people with intellectual disabilities in all aspects of life, and thereby unite people in a shared belief of a more just and welcoming world

To receive your General Orientation certification,
[click here to take the test](#)

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