



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Local Program Directors  
CC: SORI Staff  
FROM: Stephanie Palladini, CMO  
DATE: December 30, 2024  
RE: 2026 Special Olympics USA Games Quota & Selection Process – Special Olympics Team Rhode Island –  
**UPDATED as of 31 December 2024**

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**Please see updates/clarifications regarding the 2026 SO USA Games Team Rhode Island quota & selection process. 2026 Special Olympics USA Games**

**Team Rhode Island** will be comprised of **50 total delegates** from across the state who will represent Special Olympics Rhode Island at the *2026 Special Olympics USA Games in Minneapolis, Minnesota* from June 20-26, 2026.

Special Olympics Rhode Island will have participants from 6 different sports – cornhole, bowling, powerlifting, softball, swimming (aquatics) and track and field (athletics). NOTE: The softball team will be a Unified Sports® team selected from the participants who have played Unified Softball over the past 2 years.

**A complete list of the SORI quota breakdown is included in this memo.**

The 2026 SO USA Games will take place June 20-26, 2026 primarily on the University of Minnesota Campus.

The 2026 Special Olympics USA Games will feature 3,000 athletes, 10,000 volunteers, and 125,000 fans, all of whom will unite in the Orlando area and participate in one of the country's most cherished sporting events.

Athletes will compete in 15 Olympic-type team and individual sports. The Games will promote the ideals of acceptance and inclusion through sport and will showcase the athleticism and abilities of people with intellectual disabilities, while highlighting Special Olympics' work in sport, education, health and community-building.

Learn more about the [2026 Special Olympics USA Games](#)

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## Expenses

Special Olympics Rhode Island will cover the costs for travel, uniforms and all expenses related to the 2026 USA Games Team Rhode Island experience including training camp (i.e., travel, meals, lodging). There should be no additional financial burdens for local programs which have athletes, teams, or coaches selected from their community.

NOTE: Family members wishing to travel to Minnesota to support athletes will not be part of the delegation and will be expected to cover **ALL** their own expenses. Information about the families' program (credentials, access to preferred housing, tickets to ceremonies, etc.) will be shared to those with athletes and unified partners selected.

## **Advancement to 2026 Special Olympics USA Games Process – Rhode Island Athletes, Coaches and Unified Partners**

- SORI athletes and teams **will be eligible for consideration** for SO USA Games advancement by receiving a gold, silver or bronze medal\* (in SO Team Rhode Island quota selected events) at the highest-level SORI competitions held in designated competitions\* per the guidelines in the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules, Article I, Section 13 – Criteria for Advancement. The following competitions will be used to determine those eligible for consideration:
  - Athletics – 2024 SORI Summer State Games
  - Aquatics – 2024 SORI Summer State Games
  - Bowling – 2024 SORI Summer State Games
  - Powerlifting– 2024 SORI Summer State Games
  - Unified Sports® Cornhole – 2024 Fall Festival *\*Selections will be made based on criteria and advancement to a tryout will determine the final team members.*
  - Unified Sports® Softball – 2024 Unified Softball Tournament *\*Selections will be made based on criteria and advancement to a tryout will determine the final team members.*
  
- A complete list of the SORI 2026 USA Games Team Rhode Island Quota is shared in this document.
  
- Final lists of the athletes to be considered for the drawing 2026 USA Games will be made available on specific dates (see timelines for each sport). Local Program Coordinators will review and inform SORI of any concerns and provide endorsement or recommendation of removal from consideration. Complete list of criteria will be shared with local programs and assistance from SORI staff will be provided.
  
- Athletes will be considered for the drawing in all sports/events in which they have qualified to be eligible (occasionally athletes will earn a gold in multiple sports that have quota slots). However, each athlete will only be able to be selected in one sport for the USA Games. In the highly unlikely case that an athlete be selected in more than one sport, he/she would be asked to choose one sport.
  
- Applicants will be screened for appropriateness to travel, behavior, ability to be away from home for over a week, etc. (published criteria standards shared below).

## **Advancement to SO USA Games Process – Coaches in Athletics, Aquatics, Bowling, Cornhole, Powerlifting & Softball**

- Coaches will apply independent of their athletes and may be selected even if none of their local program athletes are selected. Coaches are not assured a selection to Team Rhode Island if one or more of their athletes are selected. This should not be an issue since coaches will be selected prior to the athlete drawing.
  
- A selection committee of staff and volunteers will conduct interviews to select all 2026 Team Rhode Island coaches. More information is shared in the timeline below.

## 2026 Special Olympics USA Games – TEAM Rhode Island Athlete/Team Application & Selection Timeline

### \*Office Hours will be made available for questions about the USA Games Process

- **January 3, 2025** – Selection process memo shared with Local Programs
- **January 3, 2025** – All Applications Available. An email blast will be shared with local programs and coaches. Application will also be posted on SORI website.
- **Week of January 6-10, 2025** – Email blast to be sent via SORI to all athletes, families, volunteers and coaches.
- **January 13, 2025** – Social Media post about USA games applications
- **January 20, 2025** – OFFICE HOURS 4pm-5pm [Join the meeting now](#) ,Meeting ID: 274 067 242 799  
Passcode: ri3xo9CU
- **January 22, 2025** – OFFICE HOURS 4pm-5pm [Join the meeting now](#) ,Meeting ID: 274 067 242 799  
Passcode: ri3xo9CU
- **January 31, 2025** – Reminder about application process and deadline
- **February 17, 2025** – Final reminder for applications and deadline
- **February 28, 2025** -Special Olympics USA Games Team Rhode Island Applications DUE to SORI office. No late entries will be accepted.
- **March 1 - 31, 2025** – Applications are reviewed by the selection committee and finalists are moved into the next phases accordingly.
- **March 31, 2025** – Selected Coaches Notified of next steps
- **April 25, 2025**– Selected Coaches are notified they will represent Special Olympics RI at the 2026 USA Games
- **Week of May 5-9, 2025** - SORI athletes/Unified partners in ATHLETICS, BOWLING, POWERLIFTING and SWIMMING (AQUATICS) selected by random weighted draw.
  - - Athletes who have attended a previous World Games or National Games are eligible to advance, but there will be a weighted draw that increases the odds for those who have not attended before.
  - Example: Joey has gone to World Games or National Games 2 times in his SORI career. Mike has gone once. Sean, Steve and Pedro have all never been.
  - Joey's name would go in the hat once, Mike's twice and Sean, Steve and Pedro's name each would go in 3 times. This is a weighted draw that is proportionate to the number of times that each has

*previously attended.*

- **Week of May 5-9, 2025** - SORI athletes/Unified partners Cornhole and Softball are notified of next steps
- **Week of June 8-14, 2025** – Tryouts are held for Cornhole and Softball. These tryouts are held for both Athletes and Unified Partners
- **Week of June 15-21, 2025** – Selected athletes/Unified partners for all sports offered are notified of their advancement to the 2026 USA Games.
- **Week of June 15-21, 2025** – Non - Selected athletes/Unified partners are notified they will not be attending the 2026 USA Games
- **July 4, 2025**- Delegation is announced

**2026 Special Olympics USA Games - TEAM RHODE ISLAND QUOTA**  
**26 athletes, 10 unified partners, 9 coaches, 1 chaperone, 2 staff, 2 medical = 50 delegates**  
*\*Coach and Staff gender balance for Team Rhode Island will be a factor in selection for those positions*

Below is the quota allotment for Special Olympics Rhode Island in the following 6 sports (+ UCS & ALU leadership):

**Fall**

**Sport:** **Unified Cornhole** - 2 Teams (Total Participants 5)  
**Quota:** 2 male or female Athletes  
2 male or female Unified Partners  
1 male or female coach will be selected independent of athletics athletes\*  
Gender balance will be considered during the selection process\*

**Spring**

**Sport:** **Athletics** (4 athletes and 1 coach)  
2 female - specific events will be determined after the athletes are chosen- *see ATHLETICS Performance Standards chart*  
2 male – specific events will be determined after the athletes are chosen- *see ATHLETICS Performance Standards chart*  
1 male or female coach will be selected independent of athletics athletes\*

**Sport:** **Traditional 10 Pin Bowling** (2 total athletes & 2 total partners and 1 coach)  
**Quota:** 2 female Athletes  
2 male Athletes  
1 male or female coach will be selected independent of bowling players\*

**Sport:** **Powerlifting** (2 total athletes and 1 coach)  
**Quota:** 1 female Athletes - Deadlift, Bench press & Combination  
1 male Athletes- Deadlift, Bench press & Combination  
1 male or female coach will be selected independent of powerlifting players\*

**Sport:** **Swimming (Aquatics)** (4 athletes and 1 coach)  
**Quota:** 2 female – specific events will be determined after the athletes are chosen- *see SWIMMING Performance Standards chart*  
2 male - specific events will be determined after the athletes are chosen- *see SWIMMING Performance Standards chart*  
1 male or female coach will be selected independent of swimmers\*

**Summer**

**Sport:** **Unified Softball** - 1 Team (Total Participants 19)  
**Quota:** 8 male or female Athletes  
7 male or female Unified Partners  
4 male or female coach will be selected independent of athletics athletes\*  
Gender balance will be considered during the selection process\*

**Other**

**Activity: Unified Champion Schools (UCS) Youth Leadership (1 athlete, 1 Unified partner, 1 chaperone)\*\***

**Quota:** 1 athlete – male or female  
1 Unified partner – male or female  
1 adult chaperone – male or female

*\*\*These (3) individuals will be selected by SORI UCS staff through a separate process.*

**Activity: Athlete Leader as Additional Staff (1 athlete) \*\*\***

**Quota:** 1 athlete – male or female

*\*\*\*This (1) individual will be selected by SORI staff through a separate process.*

## 2026 Special Olympics USA Games Sport Performance Standards

In select sports, minimum participation standards have been created to ensure meaningful competition and proper event selection for athletes at the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games. Please see the list below. Special Olympics Rhode Island will use these as guidelines when considering selection of athletes to fill available quota slots.

### ATHLETICS SPORT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

ATHLETICS List of Events & Standards						
Event	Male			Female		
	USA Games Record	Performance Standard	Division 1 Performance Standard	USA Games Record	Performance Standard	Division 1 Performance Standard
50m Run	7.62 (2014)	≥ 12.00	N/A	8.69 (2006)	≥ 13.00	N/A
100m Walk	23.3 (2018)	≤ 46.16	N/A	28.37 (2014)	≤ 57.98	N/A
400m Walk	1:58.7 (2006)	≤ 03:59.73	N/A	2:12.0 (2018)	≤ 04:23.81	N/A
100m Run*	11.9 (2022)	≤ 21.67	≤ 14.25	14.48 (2006)	≤ 26.56	≤ 17.46
200m Run	24.0 (2022)	≤ 44.03	≤ 28.95	29.2 (2022)	≤ 52.75	≤ 34.96
400m Run	54.63 (2010)	≤ 01:39.05	≤ 01:05.13	1:05.1 (2018)	≤ 02:01.37	≤ 01:19.81
800m Run	2:34.0 (2022)	≤ 04:02.49	≤ 02:39.44	2:40.4 (2022)	≤ 05:10.89	≤ 03:24.41
1500m Run	4:37.9 (2022)	≤ 08:31.48	≤ 05:36.30	5:22.7 (2022)	≤ 10:46.44	≤ 07:05.04
3000m Run	9:29.3 (2018)	≤ 17:58.94	≤ 11:42.42	11:20.3 (2022)	≤ 24:02.95	≤ 15:48.76
5000m Run	16:16.23 (2006)	≤ 29:36.25	≤ 19:27.91	21:59.9 (2018)	≤ 43:57.08	≤ 28:54.00
10000m Run	35:18.5 (2018)	≤ 1:08:13.83	≤ 44:51.34	55:54.0 (2022)	≤ 1:41:36.34	≤ 1:06:48.0
Long Jump	5.66m (2022)	≥ 2.72m	≥ 4.42m	3.94m (2022)	≥ 1.95m	≥ 3.18m
Mini Jav	29.3m (2014)	≥ 15.02m	≥ 24.45m	23.45m (2010)	≥ 11.10m	≥ 18.08m
Shot Put	14.07m (2014)	≥ 6.62m	≥ 10.78m	9.85m (2010)	≥ 4.61m	≥ 7.51m
Relays		N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A
Pentathlon		N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A

## SWIMMING (AQUATICS) SPORT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

SWIMMING List of Events & Standards						
	Male			Female		
Event	USA Games Record	Performance Standard	Division 1 Performance Standard	USA Games Record	Performance Standard	Division 1 Performance Standard
25 Free	13.62 (2022)	≤ 28.79	N/A	15.71 (2010)	≤ 31.79	N/A
25 Back	15.22 (2022)	≤ 31.16	N/A	19.67 (2006)	≤ 36.32	N/A
50 Free*	26.66 (2018)	≤ 47.16	≤ 31.01	29.14 (2018)	≤ 59.54	≤ 39.15
50 Back	31.40 (2018)	≤ 01:02.22	≤ 40.91	40.18 (2018)	≤ 01:15.56	≤ 49.68
50 Fly	29.30 (2022)	≤ 59.03	≤ 38.81	32.77 (2018)	≤ 01:18.79	≤ 51.80
50 Breast	38.30 (2022)	≤ 01:10.34	≤ 46.25	45.13 (2018)	≤ 01:25.22	≤ 56.03
100 Free	55.13 (2010)	≤ 01:41.45	≤ 01:06.70	01:07.16 (2022)	≤ 02:09.25	≤ 01:24.99
100 Back	01:06.82 (2018)	≤ 02:13.72	≤ 01:27.93	01:16.20 (2022)	≤ 02:39.37	≤ 01:44.79
100 Fly	58.57 (2018)	≤ 02:04.57	≤ 01:21.91	01:28.65 (2018)	≤ 02:45.97	≤ 01:49.13
100 Breast	01:10.84 (2018)	≤ 02:14.57	≤ 01:28.48	01:32.83 (2022)	≤ 02:59.36	≤ 01:57.93
100 IM	01:10.36 (2022)	≤ 02:18.87	≤ 01:31.31	01:23.83 (2018)	≤ 02:38.84	≤ 01:44.44
200 Free	01:49.05 (2018)	≤ 3:58.67	≤ 02:16.93	02:37.12 (2018)	≤ 04:59.57	≤ 03:16.97
200 IM	02:08.32 (2018)	≤ 04:37.83	≤ 03:02.68	03:04.18 (2018)	≤ 06:34.17	≤ 04:19.17
400/500 Free	04:36.93 (2006)	≤ 09:46.79	≤ 6:25.63	05:44.61 (2010)	≤ 12:45.39	≤ 08:23.26

## BOWLING SPORT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

BOWLING Sports Performance Standards						
Based on single game performance						
	Male			Female		
Event	USA Games Record	Performance Standard	Division 1 Performance Standard	USA Games Record	Performance Standard	Division 1 Performance Standard
Singles	-----	≥ 86	≥ 167	-----	≥ 67	≥ 131
Single Game	235 (2014)			178 (2022)		
3 Game Series	705 (2014)			534 (2022)		

## 2026 Special Olympics USA Games Criteria

1. Participants must be at least 16 years of age.
2. Must be a current SORI registered participant and must continue to be a registered participant through the end of the USA games competition. All forms (medical, release and/or volunteer must be current and up to date.
3. Participants must have competed in the sport/event from the previous year, January 2024-December 2024.
4. Participants must have competed in the sport/event they are applying for, for 2 out of the last 3 years, including 2024.
5. Participants must have received a gold, silver, or bronze medal in the sport they are being nominated for.
6. Participants must be committed to attending the USA Games in its entirety.
7. Participants must be available to attend all training sessions and State Competitions. This includes participation in the New England Program Games.
8. Participants must attend all SORI promotional events highlighting the USA Game.
9. Participants must be transported to and from all practices, competitions, promotional events, and meetings by themselves, a family member or their designated provider.
10. Participants must maintain the highest level of sportsmanship, abide by the Code of Conduct and Team regulations set forth by the coach and SORI.
11. Participants must be able to tolerate a 3+ hour travel day (primarily air travel) independently or with minimal supervision.
12. Participants must be able to independently handle all personal hygiene (toileting, showering).
13. Participants must be able to share living space with other members of the team.

**\*\*Participants who have attended games previously will be considered, however their selection will be on a weighted scale. Giving higher weight to those participants who have not attended the USA or World Games in the past.\*\***