



Special Olympics Maryland

CODES OF CONDUCT

MISSION OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for all persons eight years of age and older 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.

CODES OF CONDUCT

Preamble

Each person that participates in Special Olympics shall conduct him/herself at all times and in all places in a manner that befits worthy representatives of Special Olympics. **The Codes of Conduct apply to all athletes, Unified® partners, volunteers, spectators and family members whenever:**

- 1.** They are representing, participating in, or attending a Special Olympics sponsored and/or sanctioned activity. These activities shall include, but are not limited to, travel to and from training sessions, competitions and/or events at the local through International levels.
- 2.** Their conduct would impact upon the Special Olympics Maryland, Inc. program and/or its athletes, Unified® partners, coaches, volunteers, staff and participants.

These Codes define what is expected of all participants in the Special Olympics program. Anyone with knowledge of prior violent episode(s) or witnessing a violation must report it promptly to the appropriate authority. Failure to adhere to the Codes can result in disciplinary action.

Special Olympics Maryland, Inc. has established guidelines to help define inappropriate behavior and how to handle current or past violations. It is imperative for everyone to use their best judgment in addressing situations involving the violation of the various Codes of Conduct within these guidelines. There will be situations that officials, coaches, volunteers, Unified partners, athletes or SOMD staff can handle without the need to go through a formal complaint and review process. However, there are also situations in which the infraction is so inherently dangerous or contrary to Special Olympics' principles as to warrant immediate action and suspension. Therefore, Special Olympics charges everyone responsible for the safety and well-being of athletes, Unified partners, other participants, and the public to take the reasonable action necessary to protect these diverse constituencies. Any immediate action taken will be binding on the offender until the appropriate Conduct Committee reviews the situation and renders a final decision. Special Olympics Maryland, Inc. has established procedures to ensure fairness in handling violations of the Codes of Conduct.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETE'S AND UNIFIED PARTNER'S CODE OF CONDUCT

Special Olympics is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all athletes and Unified partners to honor sports and Special Olympics. All Special Olympics athletes and Unified® partners agree to the following code:

SPORTSMANSHIP

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

TRAINING AND COMPETITION

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

RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY ACTIONS

- I will not make inappropriate or unwanted physical, verbal, or sexual advance on others.
- I will not smoke or use vaping products (e-cigarettes, etc.) in non-smoking areas, including all Special Olympics training and competition venues.
- I will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs (including cannabis products) at Special Olympics events. I will not take drugs for the purpose of improving my performance.
- I will obey all laws and Special Olympics rules, the International Federation and the National Federation/Governing Body rules for my sport (s).
- I understand that if I do not obey this Code of Conduct, I will be subject to a range of consequences by my Program or a Games Organizing Committee (GOC) for a World Games up to and including not being allowed to participate.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS COACH'S CODE OF CONDUCT

Special Olympics is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all coaches to honor Sport and Special Olympics. All Special Olympics Coaches agree to observe the following code:

RESPECT FOR OTHERS

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

ENSURE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

- I will ensure that for each athlete or Unified partner I coach, the time spent with Special Olympics is a positive experience. I will respect the talent, developmental stage and goals of each athlete and Unified partner.
- I will ensure each athlete and Unified partner competes in events that challenge their potential and are appropriate to their ability.
- I will be fair, considerate and honest with athletes and communicate with athletes using simple, clear language.
- I will ensure that accurate scores are provided for entry of an athlete or Unified partner into any event.
- I will instruct each athlete and Unified partner to perform to the best of the athlete's ability at all preliminary competition and finals competition in accordance with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules.

ACT PROFESSIONALLY AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY ACTIONS

- My language, manner, punctuality, preparation and presentation will demonstrate high standards.
- I will display control, respect, dignity and professionalism to all involved in the sport (athletes, Unified partners, coaches, opponents, officials, administrators, parents, spectators, media, etc.).
- I will not use my role as a coach and leader within Special Olympics to unduly influence athletes, family members or others in an inappropriate manner or for personal benefit.
- I will encourage athletes and Unified Partners to demonstrate the same qualities.
- I will not smoke or use vaping products (e-cigarettes, etc.) in non-smoking areas, including all Special Olympics training and competition venues.
- I will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs (including cannabis products) while representing Special Olympics at training sessions or during competition.
- I will refrain from any form of personal abuse towards athletes, Unified partners and others, including verbal, physical and emotional abuse.
- I will be alert to any form of abuse from other sources directed toward athletes and Unified partners in my care.

QUALITY SERVICE TO THE ATHLETES AND UNIFIED® PARTNERS

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

HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THE ATHLETES AND UNIFIED® PARTNERS

- I will ensure that the equipment and facilities are safe to use.
- I will ensure that the equipment, rules, training and the environment are appropriate for the age and ability of the athletes and Unified® partners.
- I will review each athlete's medical form and be aware of any limitations on that athlete's participation noted on that form.
- I will encourage athletes and Unified® partners to seek medical advice when required.
- I will maintain the same interest and support towards sick and injured athletes and Unified® partners.
- I will allow further participation in training and competition only when appropriate.
- I understand that if I violate this Code of Conduct I will be subject to a range of consequences, up to and including being prohibited from coaching in Special Olympics.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS OFFICIAL'S CODE OF CONDUCT

Special Olympics is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all sport officials to honor Sport and Special Olympics. All Special Olympics sport officials agree to observe the following code:

- I will be thoroughly aware of Special Olympics conception, regulations and sports rules. I will perform my duty seriously, fairly, earnestly and accurately.
- I will be righteous, disciplined and impartial and stick to principles.
- I will be vigorous, dress properly, well-groomed and refrain from smoking/Vaping (using e-cigarettes, etc.) in the competition site.
- I will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs (including cannabis products) while representing Special Olympics at training sessions or during competition.
- I will ensure athletes and Unified partners equal opportunity and enable them to build up physical fitness, experience joy and promote friendship through participation of the events.
- I will not discriminate athletes and Unified® partners because of their physical disability. I will protect their privacy and respect athletes' rights and value.

- I will encourage athletes and Unified® partners during their competition, provide safety and be responsible for my conduct that conforms to the Games' spirit.
- I will respect coaches, staff, audiences, administrators and family members.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS VOLUNTEER'S AND SPECTATOR'S CODE OF CONDUCT

Special Olympics is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all volunteers and spectators to honor Sport and Special Olympics. All Special Olympics volunteers and spectators agree to observe the following code:

- I will respect the rights, dignity and worth of athletes, Unified® partners, coaches, officials, other volunteers, friends and spectators in Special Olympics.
- I will treat everyone equally regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or ability.
- I will respect the role and authority of all coaches, officials and other Special Olympics personnel and treat them in a professional and supportive manner.
- I will ensure that for each athlete or Unified® partner with whom I interact, the time spent with Special Olympics is a positive experience. I will respect the talent, developmental stage and goals of each athlete and Unified® partner.
- My language, manner, punctuality, preparation and presentation will demonstrate high standards.
- I will display control, respect, dignity and professionalism to all involved in the sport and activity (athletes, Unified® partners, coaches, opponents, officials, administrators, parents, spectators, media, etc.).
- I will encourage athletes and Unified® partners to demonstrate the same qualities.
- I will not smoke or use vaping products (e-cigarettes, etc.) in non-smoking areas, including all Special Olympics training and competition venues.
- I will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs (including cannabis products) while participating or attending Special Olympics training sessions or competitions.
- I will refrain from any form of personal abuse towards athletes, Unified® partners and others, including verbal, physical and emotional abuse.
- I will be alert to any form of abuse from other sources directed toward athletes and Unified® partners in my care.
- I understand that if I violate this Code of Conduct I will be subject to a range of consequences, up to and including being prohibited from participating in or attending Special Olympics events and activities.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS FAMILY MEMBER'S AND CAREGIVER'S CODE OF CONDUCT

Special Olympics is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all family members to honor Sport and Special Olympics. All Special Olympics family members agree to observe the following code:

- I will let my athlete or Unified partner choose the sports and events in which he/she would like to participate. I will not force my choice upon him/her.
- I will remember that athletes and Unified® partners participate to have fun and that the game/event is for them, not the family members.
- I will respect the role and authority of all coaches, officials and other Special Olympics personnel and treat them in a professional and supportive manner.
- I will learn the rules of the sport/event and the SOMD policies.
- I will abide by the communication processes that are put in place for me, as a family member, to receive the information I need to support my athlete's or Unified® partner's participation.
- I understand that I play a vital role in the health and safety of my athlete's or Unified® partner's participation and I have a responsibility to assist Special Olympics in providing for the health and safety of all athletes and Unified partners, by reporting suspicious behavior, talking to my athlete or Unified® partner about personal safety, dropping off and picking up my athlete or Unified® partner from Special Olympics events at the times designated by the organization (not excessively earlier or later than said established times), and any and all other reasonable measures to assist in the protection of Special Olympics athletes and Unified® partners.

- I (and my guests) will never engage in any kind of unsportsmanlike conduct, such as booing and taunting, refusing to shake hands, or using profane language and gestures, with any official, coach, athlete, Unified® partner or family member.
- I will praise my athlete or Unified® partner for competing fairly and trying hard, and I will make my athlete or Unified® partner feel like a winner every time. I will never ridicule or yell at my athlete or Unified® partner, or other participants, for making a mistake or losing a competition.
- I will promote the emotional and physical well-being of the athletes and Unified® partners ahead of any personal desire that I may have for my athlete or Unified® partner to win.
- I will not smoke or use vaping products (e-cigarettes, etc.) in non-smoking areas, including all Special Olympics training and competition venues.
- I will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs (including cannabis products) while participating or attending Special Olympics training sessions or competitions.
- I will refrain from coaching my athlete or Unified® partner, or other athletes or Unified® partners, during competitions and practices if I am not the assigned coach.

CODES OF CONDUCT INFRACTIONS

Special Olympics Maryland, Inc., through its various Conduct Committees and the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors, has sole and absolute discretion as to which, if any, disciplinary actions will be taken in the event of a violation or violations of the Codes of Conduct. Any action taken is predicated with a good faith belief of Special Olympics Maryland, Inc. and the various Conduct Committees that the disciplinary action is appropriate. The Conduct Committee may take any one or more of the following actions against an individual who violates the Codes of Conduct. The action to be taken will depend upon the nature of the infraction. The following actions may be taken:

1. Issue a warning;
2. Place the individual on probation with appropriate terms or conditions of probation;
3. Prohibit, suspend or expel from participation in any Special Olympics Maryland, Inc. programs or activities;

The disciplinary action taken by Special Olympics Maryland, Inc. through its Conduct Committees shall be based upon the severity of the infraction, any prior disciplinary action taken against the individual, and the overriding need to further the mission of Special Olympics Maryland, Inc. and provide for the safety of the coaches, athletes, Unified® partners, volunteers and members of the public.

IMMEDIATE SUSPENSION

A person may be subject to immediate disciplinary action, including suspension from participation in any activity sanctioned by Special Olympics Maryland, Inc. for conduct which in the sole discretion of Special Olympics Maryland, Inc., its following designated agents or its Conduct Committees, is so inherently harmful or egregious as to warrant immediate action. For such conduct, the appropriate Conduct Committee and each of the following individuals shall have the authority to take immediate disciplinary action:

1. The Area/County Director or designee;
2. Any SOMD staff member;
3. The Event or Games Director.

If immediate disciplinary action is taken, the person initiating the disciplinary action shall report such action directly to the appropriate Conduct Committee for further action.

Immediate disciplinary action, including suspension, may be imposed for any of the following activities or conduct:

1. **Illegal Activity.** Engaging in any illegal or criminal activity when Special Olympics Maryland, Inc. and any Conduct Committee has a good faith belief that there has been illegal activity, whether or not there has been a formal charge made.
2. **Behavior Problems.** Any person behaving in a manner that is inherently dangerous or dangerous to him/herself or to others. This includes any violent acts, harassment, or any behavior that impacts the integrity of Special Olympics Maryland, Inc. programs.
3. **Alcohol or Illegal Substance.** The transportation, storage and use or consumption of alcohol or illegal substances when:
 - a. As a volunteer, the person is responsible for the safety and well-being of athletes or Unified® partners. This includes but is not limited to all training/practice sessions, the duration of competition events, or any other Special Olympics sponsored or sanctioned activity in which athletes or Unified® partners are present.
 - b. As an athlete or Unified® partner, participating in any Special Olympics sponsored or sanctioned event including but not limited to training/practice sessions and competition events.
4. **Abuse.** Any person accused or suspected of abusing (physical or sexual), molesting, assaulting, or harassing another person.

CONDUCT COMMITTEES

Special Olympics Maryland, Inc. shall establish and have the following committees that will be responsible for overseeing all actions from alleged violations of the Codes of Conduct, and athlete or Unified® partner eligibility where there are reports of prior violent episodes.

1. **Board of Directors.** The Executive Committee of Special Olympics Maryland, Inc. Board of Directors is the final authority on all exclusion and expulsion rulings.
 - a. **Purpose.** The purpose of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors as it relates to the Codes of Conduct is to:
 - 1) Receive and review reports of all disciplinary actions taken by the State Conduct Committee.
 - 2) Hear all appeals from exclusion or expulsion decisions of the State Conduct Committee.
 - b. **Procedures.** The Executive Committee shall:
 - 1) Receive and review the quarterly report of the activities of the State Conduct Committee.
 - 2) Rule on all exclusion or expulsion appeals within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the request.
 - 3) Notify the individual of its decision as soon as possible. If the Committee notified the individual verbally, the Committee will send written confirmation as soon as practical.
2. **State Conduct Committee.** The State Conduct Committee is the final authority on all rulings except for expulsion for Code of Conduct infractions. The State Conduct Committee shall handle infractions of the Codes of Conduct that are not addressed by the other Conduct Committees.
 - a. **Committee Members.** The Committee will consist of
 - 1) the President/Chief Executive Officer,
 - 2) the highest ranking staff member in the program function,
 - 3) an Area/County Director,
 - 4) a Coach, and
 - 5) a Games Management or Games Director.
 - 6) the staff member with the primary responsibility for risk management
 - 7) an athlete (when an athlete appropriate for this role can be identified)
 - 8) Alternates should be selected in the event there is a conflict of interest for any Committee member.

9) The highest ranking staff member in the program function serving on this committee shall chair the State Conduct Committee.

b. Purpose. The purpose of the State Conduct Committee is to:

- 1) Review and with notice modify the actions of all other Conduct Committees. If, however, the State Conduct Committee intends to impose any additional or more severe disciplinary action, than that imposed by another Conduct Committee, reasonable notice and the opportunity to be heard shall be provided to the accused individual.
- 2) Hear appeal requests of decisions made by Area Conduct Committees, pursuant to the requirements and limitations listed under section 4.d. below .
- 3) Address any suspected prior violent episodes, current infractions or violations that are reported directly to the State Conduct Committee.
- 4) Review the Codes of Conduct and recommend changes to the SOMD program department.

c. Procedures.

- 1) The State Conduct Committee will receive and review reports from all other Conduct Committees regarding their actions; hear and rule on appeal requests; and investigate and rule on any reported Conduct infraction charges.
- 2) The Committee will notify the individual and other appropriate personnel of its decision as soon as possible. If the Committee notified the individual verbally, the Committee will send written confirmation as soon as practical.
- 3) The Committee shall provide a quarterly written summary of its activities to the Executive Committee.

d. Appeals

The State Conduct Committee's decisions in all cases, with the exception of expulsion, shall be final and shall not be subject to appeal.

The State Conduct Committee's decisions in expulsion cases may be appealed by a written request to the President/Chief Executive Officer, within fifteen (15) days of the Committee's written notification of the Committee's decision to the individual. The President/CEO will refer the appeal to the Executive Committee immediately. The Committee's decision to exclude or expel an individual is binding until an appeal (if filed) is decided by the Executive Committee of Board of Directors.

3. State Games Rules Committee. SOMD shall appoint a Games Rules Committee for each State event as prescribed by the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules. The Games Rules Committee's duties shall be expanded to include the responsibility of handling all Codes of Conduct violations that occur during that event.

a. Committee Members. The State Games Rules Committee will consist of

- 1) the SOMD Director of Competitions,
- 2) the Games Director, and
- 3) a coach of an athlete or Unified® partner competing in the Games.
- 4) An alternate from a different delegation shall be selected in the event that the infraction involves an athlete, Unified® partner or other individual from the coach's delegation.

b. Purpose. The purpose of the State Games Rules Committee as it relates to the Codes of Conduct is to address any infractions of the Codes of Conduct occurring during the event in addition to their other duties. The State Games Rules Committee shall have no authority after the event concludes.

c. Procedures. The State Games Rules Committee shall:

- 1) Receive a report of a suspected infraction(s) or violation(s). The Committee will investigate the report and decide the appropriate course of action.

- 2) Notify the accused and other appropriate personnel of its decision as soon as possible. The Committee's decision shall be binding for the event in question. The State Games Rules Committee shall refer the matter to the State Conduct Committee for additional action.
- 3) Submit a written report summarizing its Code of Conduct activities including any immediate disciplinary actions taken during the event to the State Conduct Committee within fifteen (15) days of the conclusion of the event. The report should be sent to the Vice President of Programs

4. Area/County Conduct Committee. Each Area/County Director shall establish an Area/County Conduct Committee.

a. **Committee Members.** The Committee will consist of

- 1) the Area/County Director,
- 2) the appropriate SOMD program staff member (typically the staff member assigned to that Area), and
- 3) a Coach or Family member.
- 4) Alternates should be selected in the event there is a conflict of interest for any Committee member.

b. **Purpose.** The purpose of the Area/County Conduct Committee is to:

- 1) Address inclusion/expulsion of athletes with prior violent episodes
- 2) Address any infractions of the Codes of Conduct policies involving Area/County personnel and their programs.
- 3) Hear any appeal requests from the Area/County Games Rules Committee, as respects Code of Conduct infractions.
- 4) Review and recommend changes to the Codes of Conduct to the Vice President of Sports Programs.

c. **Procedures.** The Area/County Conduct Committee shall:

- 1) Receive and review athlete applications with reports of prior violent episodes; hear and rule on whether athlete can participate in Special Olympics Maryland program and activities.
- 2) Receive and review the reports from the Area/County Games Rules Committee regarding their Codes of Conduct activities; hear and rule on any appeal requests from the Area/County Games Rules Committee's actions; and investigate and rule on any reported Conduct infraction charges.
- 3) Notify the accused of its decision as soon as possible. If the Committee notified the accused verbally, the Committee will send written confirmation as soon as practical. The Committee's action shall be binding. If the accused appeals the decision, the disciplinary action is binding until the State Conduct Committee reviews the matter. The Area/County Conduct Committee can also recommend additional action to the State Conduct Committee.
- 4) Provide a written summary of its activities to the State Conduct Committee within fifteen (15) days of the disposition of any complaints or appeals.

d. **Appeals.**

The Area/County Conduct Committee's decision may be appealed to the State Conduct Committee. The appeal must be submitted to the SOMD Conduct Committee Chair in writing within fifteen (15) days of the written notification of the Area/County Conduct Committee decision.

Appeals shall only be considered by the State Conduct Committee for one or more of the following reasons:

1. information was not available at the time of the Local Program Conduct Committee Meeting, is now available, and could reasonably be expected to have altered the outcome;
2. the procedures of the Local Program Conduct Committee, listed in the Code of Conduct, were not followed in a way that could have adversely affected the outcome; or
3. the severity of the sanction(s) is not consistent with the severity of the offense.

A written appeal must briefly explain the grounds on which they wish to appeal. After receiving the letter of appeal, the State Conduct Committee will then determine if they will hear the appeal, and communicate that, along with State Conduct Committee procedures, when appropriate. The decision of the State Conduct Committee on appeals, including whether or not to hear an appeal, is final.

- 5. Area/County Games Rules Committee.** Each Area/County Director must appoint a Games Rules Committee as required by the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules. The Area/County Games Rules Committee's duties shall be expanded to include the responsibility of handling all Codes of Conduct violations that occur during that event.
 - a. Committee Members.** The Area/County Games Rules Committee will consist of
 - 1) the Area/County Games Director,
 - 2) an Area/County Committee member, and
 - 3) a coach of an athlete or Unified® partner competing in the Games.
 - 4) An alternate from a different team/program shall be selected in the event that the infraction involves an athlete or other individual from the coach's team/program.
 - b. Purpose.** The purpose of the Area/County Games Rules Committee, as respects the Codes of Conduct, is to address any infractions of the Codes of Conduct occurring during the event in addition to their other duties. The Area/County Games Rules Committee shall have no authority after the event concludes.
 - c. Procedures.** The Area/County Games Rules Committee shall:
 - 1) Receive report(s) of suspected infraction(s) or violation(s). The Committee will investigate the report(s) and decide the appropriate course of action(s).
 - 2) Notify the accused of its decision as soon as possible. The Committee's decision shall be binding for the event in question. The Area/County Games Rules Committee shall refer the matter to the Area/County Conduct Committee for additional action.
 - 3) Submit a written report summarizing its Code of Conduct activities during the event to the Area/County Director and the SOMD Program department within fifteen (15) days of the conclusion of the event.