

## **SOHO Participation Criteria**

- Resident of Howard County or attends a Howard County school
- School age athletes have an IEP (or had an IEP for adult athletes) or have been identified by an agency or professional as having intellectual or closely related disabilities. *Athletes who have physical disabilities, but who do not have intellectual disabilities are not eligible for Special Olympics.*
- Children 6-7 years of age may participate in age-appropriate Special Olympics training programs when a parent or adult volunteer is there to provide one-to-one assistance. Athletes can begin participating in competitions in most sports at age 8 (some exceptions, e.g., powerlifting athletes cannot train or compete until age 16).
- Families or caregivers are required to provide a one-to-one assistant for athletes with behavioral issues.
- Continued behavioral issues will result in suspension from the program.

## **Out-of-County Participation**

- Out-of-county athletes that have participated in the past are grandfathered into the program and have same privileges as a county athlete.
- New Out-of-county athletes (i.e., have never participated in SOHO) are welcome under the following conditions:
  - Space is available in the sport in which they would like to participate.
  - The home county will be asked to cover training and competition costs.
  - When competition slots are limited, the following will apply:
    - For individual sports, out-of-county athletes will get last choice. SOHO will notify state and respective county that the athlete is training with us and eligible to go to state games based on minimum eligibility criteria (i.e., 10 hours practice and two preliminary competitions), but due to limited slots the athlete will not attend states with SOHO. We will request that the athlete receive consideration under their home county or that the state allots an additional slot for SOHO to take that athlete.
    - For team sports, the decision about out-of-county athlete participation has to be made at the outset of training. If 14 athletes are training for soccer and only 12 are allowed on the roster, the coaches and coordinators need to decide to go with two teams or notify the athlete that he/she won't be eligible to participate in the competition.