



WELCOME to Special Olympics! Special Olympics is a sports training and competition program for persons with intellectual disabilities [mental retardation]. Approximately 9,500 children and adults participate in Special Olympics Oklahoma, but that number is only a small percentage of those eligible. We hope the information provided will be helpful in getting your friend, family member, student, or co-worker involved. ***Special Olympics provides something for everyone, from fitness & fun to family support and friendships!***

Participation in Special Olympics occurs in many ways. While in school students generally compete with a school team; with their Special Education or P.E. teacher being their coach. If a school does not have a team, athletes can participate as independents or with a community-based team (often begun and lead by parents). Many people believe that once out of school competition in Special Olympics ends. This is definitely *not* the case! Once out of school an athlete can participate with community-based teams, teams formed by provider agencies, or as an independent.

Official competition is for those 8 years old and above. However, Special Olympics Oklahoma offers “Young Athletes, Stars of the Future”. This is a training event for youngsters 3-7 years old and takes place during Summer State Games and Winter State Games. Several areas now offer this event during the spring.

No matter how the competition occurs the one constant in all of this is the COACH! Because Special Olympics is a *sports training* and *competition* program all athletes need a coach to assist in their training. A coach may be a parent or other relative, a close friend, or anyone willing to get some training, provide practice opportunities for their athlete(s), and do a little paperwork. Coaches’ training clinics are offered during the year and are free of charge.

Approximately 120 competitions are offered throughout the state each year. Area/local fall and spring competitions occur between September and April (see “A Year in Review”). Two state competitions are held as well; Winter Games in Norman in January and Summer Games in Stillwater in May.

This is just a brief introduction to Special Olympics Oklahoma. Please examine the information provided. If you have questions or need more information please contact Cathi Morris, Program Services Manager at 800/722-9004 or 918/481-1234 or cathi@sook.org

BE A FAN OF EMPOWERMENT!

What happens next?

- **Find a team:** check with the potential athlete's school / workshop / group home/or other service provider to see if they already participate. If so, be sure to let the coach know of that individual's interest. The coach should provide you with needed forms and information. A list of community teams is included in this packet. Community teams are generally led by parents & other community volunteers. And more are needed!
- **If there is not an established team** the individual can join, **you** (or the designated coach) will need to know the **competition dates & locations**, as well as entry deadlines. **Competition Schedules are available on our website coaches' info page: www.sook.org . They are posted at the following times: fall (Aug), Winter State Games (Nov), spring (Dec), Summer State Games (Feb).** If you are unable to download the packet call the state office in Tulsa and ask to be mailed one, 800/722-9004 or 918/481-1234.
- **Athlete Application for Participation/Medical Release Form:** This is **required** of all Special Olympics athletes. The current form is good through August 2013. These are always included in the competition schedule and can be found on the website under "forms". The coach is to include a **copy** of the completed form with each sport entry. A one time Down Syndrome Addendum is required for those athletes with Down's Syndrome.
- **Train and practice!** Whether your Special Olympics athlete is part of a team or participating as an independent, training and practice is essential! All sports require entry scores in order for the athletes to be placed in correct/fair competition groups. Accurate entry scores can only come from training and practice!
- **Coaches' Training:** Teams are required to have at least one person (coach/assistant coach) certified in each sport their athletes enter. Coaches' Certification Courses are offered several times each year in different sports and are free to attend. Training opportunities are included in the Spring and Fall Competition Schedules (see website). A 2-day Coaches Camp is held in June and offers training in many sports.
- **Volunteer Applications and Background Screenings:** All coaches & other Class A volunteers are **required to have a current volunteer application** on file with Special Olympics Oklahoma. Background screenings through a national vendor are conducted on all Class A volunteers. In addition all Class A volunteers are required to complete the online **Protective Behaviors Training** (see link on our website). This process should be completed prior to working with Special Olympics athletes. The complete Volunteer Registration & Screening Policy can be found on the SOOK website under Volunteers. ***Class A volunteers are defined as those persons who have regular, close contact with Special Olympics athletes, persons in a position of authority or supervision, & persons with administrative responsibility. This includes coaches, assistant coaches, chaperones, Unified Sports Partners, organizational committee members. Parents & Family members fitting the description are also considered Class A volunteers – even if they are responsible for their child only.***
- **Form a team:** Training and practice is much more fun (and beneficial) when done in groups! If you want to form a community team (lead by parents, volunteer coaches, and others from your community) contact the state office. We will contact other independents in your area, as well as volunteers interested in coaching, set-up and facilitate an organizational meeting. Community teams are not just for adults, many school age athletes compete individually, too, but could benefit from the team atmosphere.

WHO IS THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETE?

Is the person eight (8) years of age or older?

YES



Is the person identified by a school, agency or professional as having an **intellectual disability or cognitive delay**?

NO



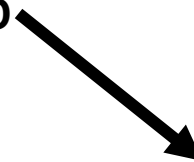
The person is **NOT** eligible for Special Olympics.

YES



This person is eligible for Special Olympics.

NO



Is the person identified by a school, agency or professional as having a developmental disability with functional limitations in both general learning and adaptive skills?

YES



Are the functional limitations solely due to: physical disabilities, emotional disturbance, behavior disorders, specific learning or sensory disabilities?

NO



This person is eligible for Special Olympics.

YES



This person is **NOT** eligible for Special Olympics.

ELIGIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Under the “Eligibility” section of the Official Special Olympics General Rules (Section 6.01), it states the following regarding “Eligibility for Participation in Special Olympics”:

(a) **General Statement of Eligibility.**

Every person with an intellectual disability who is at least eight years of age is eligible to participate (train and compete) in Special Olympics.

(b) **Age Requirements.**

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. An Accredited Program may permit children who are at least six years old to participate in age-appropriate Special Olympics training programs offered by that Accredited Program, or in specific (and age-appropriate) cultural or social activities offered during the course of a Special Olympics event. Such children may be recognized for their participation in such training or other non-competition activities through certificates of participation, or through other types of recognition approved by SOI which are not associated with participation in Special Olympics competition. However, no child may participate in a Special Olympics competition (or be awarded medals or ribbons associated with competition) before his or her eighth birthday. (*Special Olympics Oklahoma offers participation in the Young Athletes Program for those 3 – 7 years of age.*)

(c) **Degree of Disability.**

Participation in Special Olympics training and competition is open to all persons with intellectual disabilities who meet the age requirements of this Section 6.01, regardless of the level or degree of that person’s disability, and whether or not that person also has other mental or physical disabilities, so long as that person registers to participate in Special Olympics as required by these General Rules.

(d) **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:

- (1) The person has been identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability as determined by their localities; or
- (2) The person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures such as intelligent quotient or “IQ” testing or other measures which are generally accepted within the professional community in that Accredited Program’s nation as being a reliable measurement of the existence of a cognitive delay; or
- (3) 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). However, persons whose functional limitations are based solely on a physical, behavioral, or emotional disability, or a specific learning or sensory disability, are not eligible to participate as Special Olympics athletes, but may be eligible to volunteer for Special Olympics.

A YEAR IN REVIEW

This represents a typical year of Special Olympics Oklahoma programming.

JUNE – AUGUST

June Coaches Camp for sport certification clinics
Areas work on next year's competition, training, & fundraising schedules

AUGUST

Fall Competition Schedules are posted to Coaches Info webpage
Fall Volunteer Schedules are posted to Volunteer Info webpage

SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER

Aquatics, Art & Music Basketball (& skills), Traditional & Unified® Bowling,
Equestrian, Golf, 5-a-side Unified® Soccer (& skills), Unified® Volleyball

NOVEMBER

Winter State Games Registration packet posted to Coaches Info webpage
Winter State Games Volunteer Registration Form posted to Volunteer Info webpage

JANUARY

Winter State Games held in the OKC Metro area include basketball/bowling/volleyball

Spring Competition Schedules posted to Coaches Info webpage
Spring Volunteer Schedules posted to Volunteer Info webpage

FEBRUARY - APRIL

Athletics, Traditional & Unified® Bocce, Golf, Traditional & Unified® Horseshoes ,
Motor Activities Training Program, Powerlifting, Unified® Softball,
Unified® 3 on 3 Basketball

MARCH

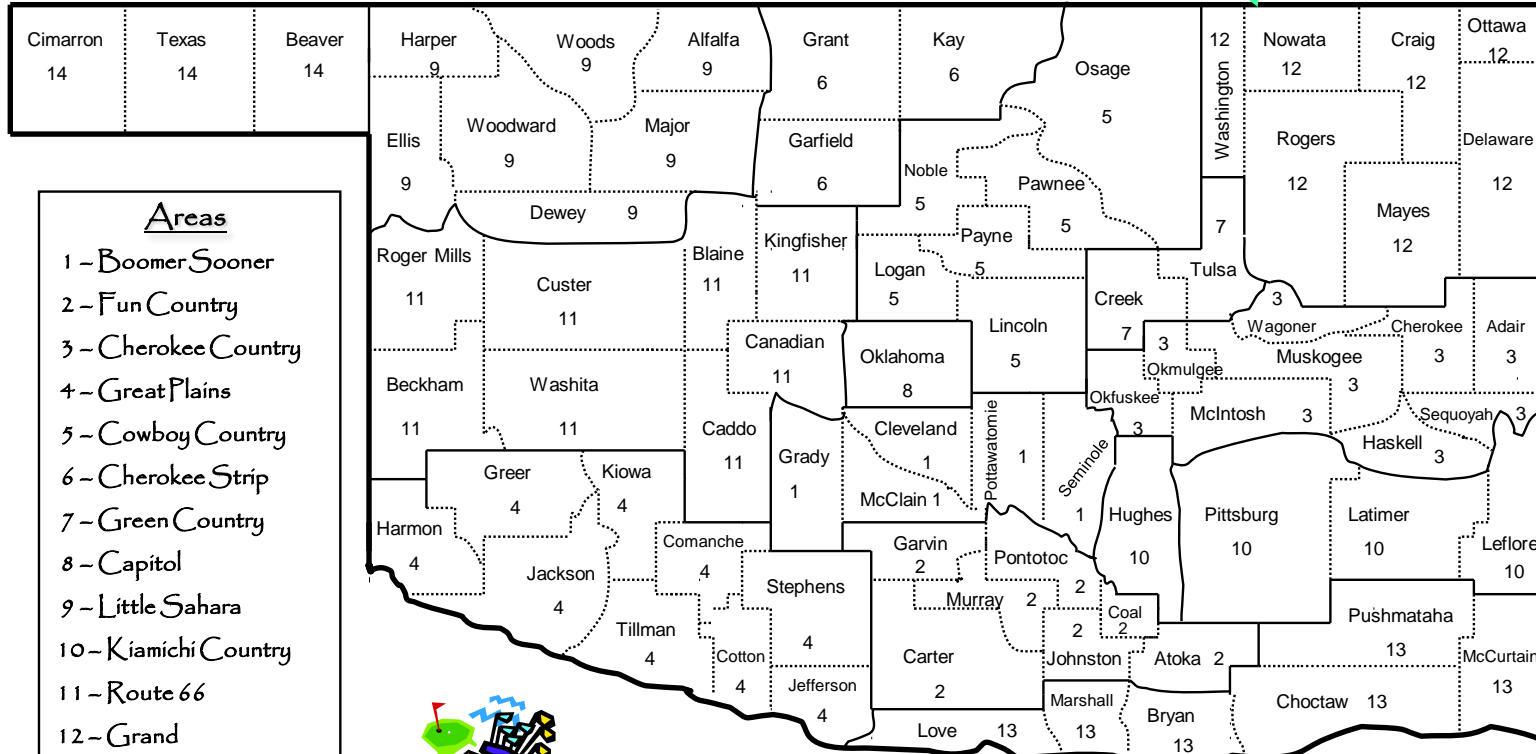
Summer State Games Registration packet posted to Coaches Info webpage
Summer State Games Volunteer Registration Form posted to Volunteer Info webpage

MAY

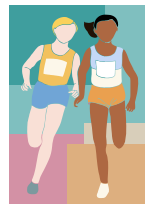
Summer State Games in Stillwater include spring sports and traditional bowling

*** Mandatory Sport Training Clinics for Coaches are offered throughout the year.*

SOOK Area Map



- Areas**
- 1 - Boomer Sooner
 - 2 - Fun Country
 - 3 - Cherokee Country
 - 4 - Great Plains
 - 5 - Cowboy Country
 - 6 - Cherokee Strip
 - 7 - Green Country
 - 8 - Capitol
 - 9 - Little Sahara
 - 10 - Kiamichi Country
 - 11 - Route 66
 - 12 - Grand
 - 13 - Red River
 - 14 - Panhandle



**Special Olympics
Oklahoma**





Special Olympics
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Fact Sheet

Unified Sports®

Background

Unified Sports® is a pioneering program that combines athletes with and without mental retardation, of similar age and ability, on teams that compete against other Unified Sports® teams. The Unified Sports® program was launched throughout the United States in 1989, after two years of field testing. Unified Sports® expands sports opportunities for athletes seeking new challenges and dramatically increases integration in the community.

Special Olympics Oklahoma currently includes Unified Sports® competition in the following sports:
3on3 Basketball, Bocce, Bowling, Horseshoes, Soccer, Softball, and Volleyball.

Benefits of Unified Sports®

- Integrates athletes with and without mental retardation in a setting where all athletes are challenged to improve their skills:
- Provides a valuable sports opportunity to individuals with mental retardation who are not presently involved with Special Olympics: especially those with mild retardation, and those in communities where there are not enough Special Olympics athletes to conduct team sports:
- Prepares athletes with higher level skills for participation in school or community sports:
- Increases public awareness of the spirit and skills of individuals with mental retardation:
- Enables Special Olympics athletes' families to participate as team members or coaches on Unified Sports® teams:
- And enables athletes to develop friendships and an understanding of each other's capabilities through a spirit of equality and team unity.

How it Works

A Special Olympics Unified Sports® program can be conducted in a variety of settings:

- A program organized by a Special Olympics group
- A community or church sports program, such as an adult softball league or YMCA volleyball league
- An interscholastic or intramural after-school league at the junior high school or high school levels
- A part of the league system at a local bowling center
- An independent league sponsored by businesses or civic groups
- A program in cooperation with a local recreation and park association.

For more information about Unified Sports® contact the State Office Sports Department:

1/800 722-9004

918/481-1234

info@sook.org

DIVISIONING

A unique aspect of Special Olympics is the method by which athletes are grouped for competition. Athletes are grouped by gender, age, and ability; with ability being very important. The coach plays a major role in providing enough practice that scores used for entry into events are accurate.

Age divisions: 8 – 11, 12 – 15, 16 – 21, 22 – 29, 30 & above

Competition/ability groups: No more than 8 athletes or teams will be in any one competition group (called heats). Each heat is based upon entering scores. Hence, the need for training & practice!

Divisioning provides all competitors a chance to excel. All athletes who participate receive an award. Athletes are given awards based on order of finish – first through eighth place. There is only one first place winner per heat, but there may be several heats in a particular age group, giving many an opportunity to “win”.



Special Olympics

Oklahoma

Be a fan..
