

SPECIAL OLYMPICS OKLAHOMA HOUSING POLICY

Special Olympics is an athlete-centered movement that welcomes athletes with intellectual disabilities to participate in sports training and competition. The health and safety of all Special Olympics participants is of paramount importance to Special Olympics Oklahoma. Some Special Olympics events require an overnight stay, and arranging housing for overnight events involves the consideration of a variety of factors. In accordance with Special Olympics International requirements, Special Olympics Oklahoma establishes this Housing Policy. All athletes and coaches must follow this Housing Policy during any Special Olympics sponsored overnight event.

POLICY REQUIREMENTS

SUPERVISION

The coach/chaperone-to-athlete ratio of one properly registered coach/chaperone to every four athletes (1:4) must be maintained during overnight events. All chaperones, including family members of athletes, must be screened in compliance with Special Olympics U.S. Volunteer Screening Policy.

GENDER

Neither athletes nor volunteers may share a room with an athlete or volunteer of the opposite sex unless they are:

1. Married athletes who are both registered members of the delegation for that event;
2. Married volunteers who are both attending the event as members of a registered delegation;
3. Family members of the opposite sex who serve as a one-to-one chaperone for their athlete and who are attending the event as a member of a registered delegation; or
4. An athlete requiring a specifically designated aide or medical staff required by State or Federal law.

YOUNG ATHLETES

All Young Athlete participants under the age of 8 must be accompanied by a properly registered and screen parent, guardian, or individual designed by their parent or guardian at all overnight events. Whenever possible, Young Athletes and their chaperones should not be housed in the same room as other members of the delegation who are over the age of 8.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

This Housing Policy will be implemented by the Local Program, consisting of the athletes and Head Coach. Head Coaches have been educated about this Housing Policy, and by submitting a Coaches Card for competition, they confirm that they will abide by this Housing Policy. Additionally, Head Coaches are responsible for advising parents, guardians, or provider agencies of this Housing Policy and for receiving acknowledgment that their athletes and assigned chaperones will follow it. The Head Coach should use his/her best judgment when organizing aspects of housing for their Team, and make decisions based on ensuring the health and safety of their athletes/partners.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

All parents and guardians, or athletes if they are able, by signing the medical/release form, acknowledge that they have read this Housing Policy, that they understand it and that they will follow it. Parents and guardians should discuss overnight events and room assignments with their athletes' Head Coach prior to the event. Parents and guardians should notify the Special Olympics Oklahoma State Office if they have concerns about the proposed housing arrangements for an overnight event. They should also notify the Special Olympics Oklahoma State Office about any other information they feel is pertinent relative to this Housing Policy prior to an overnight event.

BEST PRACTICES

Head coaches are encouraged to incorporate the following best practices:

1. Whenever possible, each athlete should be assigned his/her own bed.
 - a. If sharing a bed is required, an athlete may not share a bed with a chaperone unless the chaperone is a family member of the athlete and has been screened in compliance with the Special Olympics U.S. Volunteer Screening Policy.
 - b. If sharing a bed is required, athletes should be encouraged to bring sleeping bags and to sleep in their own sleeping bag on top of the bed, instead of in the bed.
2. Use air mattresses when possible to increase the number of beds available.
3. Ensure that all coaches and/or chaperones have keys to their assigned athletes' rooms.

Ensure that athletes know how to reach their coaches and/or chaperones at all times.