



**Special Olympics**  
South Dakota



# ATHLETE HANDBOOK

## Cheerleading

2021

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**Dear Special Olympics Athlete,**

Congratulations on becoming a part of Special Olympics South Dakota (SOSD)!

Through your commitment to Special Olympics and its programs, we challenge you to train and compete in all sports you desire. We also challenge you to find your voice and to help us shape and grow SOSD. There are many exciting ways to be an athlete and a leader, so be sure to ask your coach or the Special Olympics office for more resources.

By participating in sports, physical fitness, and health education programs, you will increase self-confidence and social skills, improve physical and motor skills, and have more opportunities to grow as a person. This handbook is designed to introduce SOSD to you and to provide general information needed as an athlete.

We wish you luck, and can't wait to see you out on the field and in the community!



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## 1. Competition

The state is divided into four Areas. The city in which you live will determine which Area competitions you attend.

Northeast (NE) - Aberdeen, Huron, Watertown, and the surrounding communities

Southeast (SE) - Brookings, Mitchell, Sioux Falls, Yankton, and the surrounding communities

Black Hills (BH) - Custer, Rapid City, Spearfish, and the surrounding communities

Central (C) - Pierre, Mission, Winner, and the surrounding communities. These delegations do not have dedicated Area competitions to attend. In other words, you can choose where you wish to go.

For those who qualify, there are also State competitions held in the following sports:

**State Basketball Tournament** - Team (Traditional & Unified), Cheerleading (Traditional & Unified), and Skills (Individual & Team)

**State Summer Games** - Swimming (Traditional & Unified), Powerlifting, Volleyball, Soccer (Traditional & Unified), Soccer Skills, Racewalking, and Track & Field (Traditional & Unified)

**State Equestrian**

**Fall Classic** - Bocce (Traditional & Unified), Softball (Traditional & Unified), and Softball Skills

**State Traditional Bowling**

**State Unified Bowling**

Eligibility to participate in these events will depend on you meeting all of the training requirements and rules developed by your Delegation or Team.

Please Note: Delegations and Teams may choose to NOT participate in events. There could be many reasons for this, including the availability of coaches, finances, and roster numbers.

## 2. Practices / Training Requirements

The time, place, duration, and content of your practices will be established by your program leadership and can vary rather significantly from program to program. However, rest assured your coaches have completed the required certification course work and have demonstrated competence in coaching their sport. The following are general training expectations set forth by the State Office:

- Bowling: A minimum of five 3-game series or a total of 15 games over a minimum of 8 weeks.
- Winter Games: A minimum of 15 hours over a minimum of 8 weeks.
- Basketball: A minimum of 15 hours over a minimum of 8 weeks.
- Summer Games: A minimum of 15 hours over a minimum of 8 weeks. The number of hours required would be divided among the number of sports in which you are participating; for example 3 sports - 5 hrs per sport / 2 sports - 7.5 hrs per sport / 1 sport - 15 hours.
- Equestrian: A minimum of 15 hours over a minimum of 8 weeks.

- Fall Classic: A minimum of 15 hours over a minimum of 8 weeks. The number of hours required would be divided among the number of sports in which you are participating; for example 2 sports - 7.5 hrs per sport / 1 sport - 15 hours.

### **3. Unified Sports**

There are two kinds of teams in Special Olympics, Traditional and Unified. Everyone on a Traditional Team is a Special Olympics Athlete. On a Unified Team, some of the players have a disability and some do not.

### **4. Athletes Code of Conduct**

Special Olympics is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all athletes to honor sports and Special Olympics. All Special Olympics athletes and Unified Sports Partners are expected to observe 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 division.

#### **Responsibility for My Actions**

I will not make inappropriate or unwanted physical, verbal, or sexual advances on others.

I will not smoke or vape in non-smoking areas.

I will not drink alcohol or use illegal drugs 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.

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 for a World Games, up to and including not being allowed to participate.

### **5. You Know What I mean?**

People often use short-cuts when speaking and writing about Special Olympics.

DQ = Disqualification. An athlete will receive only a participation ribbon when, during competition, a judge determines a rules infraction has occurred.

GOC = Games Organizing Committee. For every State event we host, there is a group of people from the host city who help organize the event.

HA = Healthy Athletes. At our State Summer Games, we provide health screenings to athletes.

HOD = Head of Delegation. This is the person in charge of your delegation/team.

ID = Intellectual Disability. All athletes participating in Special Olympics have an ID.

LETR = Law Enforcement Torch Run. These are people who help raise money for SOSD.

SO or SOI = Special Olympics and Special Olympics, Inc. The preferred name is Special Olympics.

SOSD = Special Olympics South Dakota. SOSD is a state program of Special Olympics. The State Office is located in Sioux Falls.

UP = Unified Partners. These are players on teams who do not have an ID.

YA = Young Athletes. These are future Special Olympics athletes who are ages 2 - 7.

## **6. Application for Participation in Special Olympics South Dakota**

To participate in Special Olympics, you must complete Form A: Application for Participation in Special Olympics South Dakota. This form contains the following components:

- ⇒ Your contact information
- ⇒ Contact information for a parent/guardian
- ⇒ Health insurance information
- ⇒ Physical exam that must be completed by a medical professional every three years
- ⇒ A release signed by either you or a parent/guardian
- ⇒ Once this form is completed, you should give it to your HOD. They will give a copy to the State Office.
- ⇒ If you should get injured or become ill at a Special Olympics event and should require the care of a medical professional, your HOD should bring this document with you.

## **7. Concussions**

### **Defining a Concussion**

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury caused when you get hit on the head or from a bunch of smaller blows to the head. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth—causing the brain to bounce around or twist within the skull. Although concussions are usually not life-threatening, their effects can be serious, therefore, proper attention must be paid to individuals suspected of sustaining a concussion.

### **Suspected or Confirmed Concussion**

If a coach or official thinks you have sustained a concussion in a practice, game, or competition, you will be removed

from practice, play, or competition at that time. If a qualified medical professional is available on-site to render an evaluation, that person shall have final authority as to whether or not a concussion is suspected. If applicable, your parent or guardian should be made aware that the participant is suspected of sustaining a concussion.

### **Return to Play**

If you have been removed from practice, play or competition due to a suspected concussion, you may not participate in Special Olympics sports activities until either of the following occurs A) at least seven consecutive days have passed since you were removed from play and a currently licensed, qualified medical professional\* provides written clearance for the participant to return to practice, play and competition or B) a currently licensed, qualified medical professional determines you did not suffer a concussion and provides written clearance for you to return to activities immediately. Written clearance in either of the scenarios above shall become a permanent record.

\*A qualified medical professional is defined as a person who is registered, certified, licensed, or otherwise recognized in law, by the State of South Dakota, to provide medical treatment and is trained and experienced in the evaluation, management, and care of concussions.

## **8. Abuse**

Your health, safety, and well-being are of the highest concern to those in your Special Olympics family (Coaches, chaperones, staff, and volunteers). If you should ever feel unsafe or mistreated, we urge you to seek the assistance of a family member or a trusted member of your Special Olympics family.

## **9. Competition Readiness**

To compete at your best you need to be prepared!

1. Proper sports equipment: For example, you will need a softball glove that fits your hand.
2. Uniform or sports clothing: Blue jeans are not appropriate for competition. Your shoelaces should be tied and you should be wearing sports socks.
3. Proper sports shoes: If you wear cowboy boots while competing in basketball, for example, the possibility of injuring an ankle is quite high. Plus, you won't look like a serious athlete.
4. Minimal or no jewelry.
5. Hair is out of your face.
6. Sunscreen on exposed skin.
7. Eat a healthy snack or meal within 2-3 hours of the event.
8. Drink one bottle of water within an hour of the event.
9. Warm-up before the event.

## **10. Year-round Fitness**

Staying fit and healthy should not end when your latest State event is over. It is very important for you to set fitness goals and strive to fulfill them. Here are some ideas:

1. Work out or go for a walk at least 5 times per week.

2. Eat fast food no more than 3 times per week.
3. Get 8 hours of sleep per night.
4. Drink 5 large glasses of water per day.
5. Do not drink soda... even diet soda.
6. Eat 5 fruits and/or vegetables every day.

## 11. Athlete Leadership

Inclusion starts with Athlete Leadership! What does the word “inclusion” mean? Many things, but as it applies to Special Olympics it means:

- A. You should have the opportunity to enjoy the same experiences as people without an ID, and;
- B. You should have the same opportunities to contribute to SO through the sharing of your talents and gifts outside of competition.

The following are roles athletes can and should be filling:

1. Athlete Leadership Council
2. Coaches
3. Committee Members
4. Fund-raisers
5. Games Organizing Committee Members
6. Global Messengers (Giving Speeches)
7. Health Promoters
8. Officials
9. Photographers
10. Reporters
11. SOSD Board of Directors
12. Volunteers

For more information regarding any of these roles, contact the state office at 605.331.4117.

## 12. Fundraising

It takes a lot of money to put on Special Olympics events. You can help your local program as well as the State with this. We strongly encourage you to attend fundraising events in your community and actively help out when applicable.

**For you to perform at your best, you need to know the rules of the game. Look for Athlete Handbooks for all of your sports.**

# Special Olympics South Dakota Sports Rules - Cheer

## Appropriate Attire

1. **Uniform** - Team members must wear outfits alike in style and color. Jeans are not permitted. All team members must have athletic shoes (e.g. tennis shoes) with non-marking soles in like style.
2. **Women's Attire** - Bottoms: pants, shorts, skorts, or skirts (must be at least mid-thigh in length). No slit allowed in skorts, shorts, or skirts. Briefs or bloomers must be worn under all skirts. Tops: tank-top, collared shirt, or tee shirt (no pockets). No halter tops will be allowed. Straps must be at least 1" in width. Spaghetti straps will not be permitted. When standing at attention, apparel must cover the midriff
3. **Jewelry** - Jewelry of any kind including but not limited to ear, nose, tongue, belly button, and facial rings, clear plastic jewelry, and bracelets are prohibited. Jewelry must be removed and may not be taped over. Stickers and/or glitter will be allowed but careful consideration must be made so that it is presented tastefully. Glitter should not be flaking off. Exceptions: medical ID tags/bracelets, and uniform rhinestones. Rhinestones are illegal when adhered to the skin as opposed to a uniform. Temporary tattoos **are** allowed.
4. **Hair** - For safety reasons, long hair should be out of the face and secured (if applicable).
5. **Props** - Props are allowed (posters, mascots, pom poms).

## Appropriate Equipment

1. Performing surfaces must be suitable and free from objects. When discarding props (signs, etc.) that are made of solid material, or have corners or sharp edges, team members must gently toss or place the props.
2. Use of mini-tramps, springboards, spring-assisted floors, or any height-increasing apparatus is illegal for use during performances/competitions.

## General Cheerleading Rules

1. Spectators and fans are prohibited in the competition areas. Only registered/approved coaches and athletes should be on the official playing field/area.
2. All cheers/routines should stress the spirit of good sportsmanship. Derogatory comments directed toward players, coaches, or officials will not be tolerated.
3. All cheerleaders should receive proper training before attempting any form of cheerleading gymnastics (e.g. tumbling, partner stunts, and jumps). The only tumbling allowed for SOSD competitions are forward & backward rolls, cartwheels, and round offs.
4. For Unified Sports® teams, the level of tumbling should not exceed that of what Special Olympics athletes are capable of performing.
5. Coaches are **not** allowed on the floor during the performance of any routine **for any division**. Spotters are permitted on the floor, but cannot coach the squad.
6. Below are some examples of safety infractions that incur penalty points during competition:
  - ⇒ Unsecured hair devices for longer hair
  - ⇒ Walking on or over props
  - ⇒ Inappropriate or vulgar choreography
  - ⇒ Unsportsmanlike conduct from participant, coach, parent and/or spectator
7. When competing in a Unified Sports competition, the number of Special Olympics athletes must be equal to or ex-

ceed the number of Unified Partners. If at any time during competition the number of Unified Partners exceeds the number of Special Olympic Athletes, the squad will compete for participation ribbons only. There are no exceptions to this rule.

## **Rules of Competition**

1. A squad must be registered at either a beginner level or an intermediate level.
  - ⇒ **Beginner** - Competition shall consist of each squad of cheerleaders performing three cheers in a time limit of 1 minute and 30 seconds.
  - ⇒ **Intermediate** - Competition shall consist of each squad of cheerleaders performing a music routine as well as three cheers in a time limit of 2 minutes.
2. Routines can consist of a choreographed performance, yells, jumps, high kicks, somersaults, and gymnastics moves.
3. There should be no prompting from the audience. However, since this is a cheerleading competition, crowd response is allowed. It is up to the judges to determine whether the cheerleaders are leading the crowd, or the crowd is leading the cheerleaders. Prompting can result in deductions in points.
4. Unified Partners and/or coaches may place the athletes in their proper position on the floor, but the coach may not be on the floor once the performance begins.
5. A coach may give verbal or physical cues from the sideline if needed (coaches must be out of the judges' view).
6. Individuals and teams may choose their music which must be suitable for family listening. Music must be operated by a coach from your program

## **Judging**

**During competition, you will be judged on the following:**

### **SELF-MOTIVATION:** (maximum 5 points)

Each cheering team should have a cheerleader (one or more) who sets the pace for the team. If a coach providing the incentive for the team, fewer points should be awarded.

### **EXECUTION OF CHEERS:** (maximum 5 points)

Judges will look for how well the cheer was performed; this includes arm motions, knowledge of words, and voice projection.

### **PERSONAL APPEARANCE and UNIFORMING:** (maximum 10 points)

This will include neatness, formations, and overall appeal; uniforms alike in style and color including athletic shoes with non-marking soles.

### **USE OF PROPS AND BANNERS:** (maximum 5 points)

Includes pom-poms, posters, signs, etc.

### **POISE:** (maximum 5 points)

Judges look for overall poise in front of the crowd. Does the squad continue to perform even if they make mistakes?

### **ENTHUSIASM AND SPIRIT:** (maximum 10 points)

Judges will look for smiles, enthusiasm, and overall spirit projection.

Are athletes enjoying themselves?