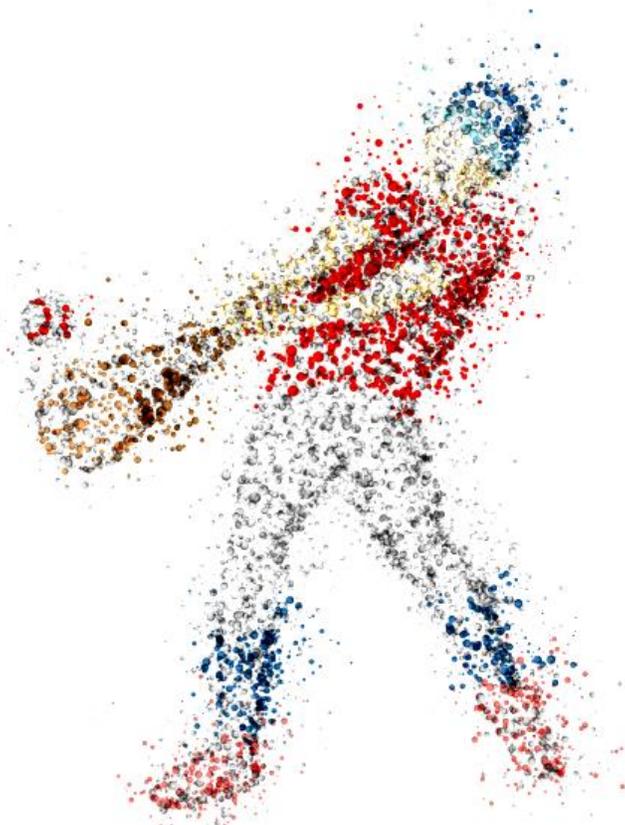




**Special Olympics**  
South Dakota



# ATHLETE HANDBOOK

## Softball

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 persport / 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 - Softball

## Softball & Coach Pitch General Rules

### Equipment and Uniforms

1. Batters and runners must wear helmets at all times while in the live-ball territory. Athletes coaching from the coaches box must also wear a helmet.
2. Athletes who remove their helmet during play shall be declared out.
3. Catchers must wear a helmet, face mask, and chest protector. Shin guards are optional.
4. No jewelry allowed.
5. All uniforms must be alike in color, trim, and style.

### Game Length and Field

1. A game will last seven innings or 50 minutes. NO new inning will begin after 50 minutes (Exception to go over 50 minutes is that teams must have equal batting opportunities)
2. If a team has a 15-run lead after the completion of three innings or a 10-run lead after the completion of five innings the game will be over.
3. If a game is tied at the end of regulation play, extra innings will be played with a maximum of two extra innings. If the game remains tied after the completion of both extra innings, the result will be determined by going back to the last inning when a team (either team) had the lead.
4. The pitching rubber distance from the home plate may be modified to a minimum distance of 40' from the official distance of 50'.
5. Distance between bases will be 65'.
6. For safety purposes, a double first base will be used. The baserunner must use the safety 1st base.
7. For safety purposes, a double home plate will be used. If there is a play at the plate, the runner will be called out if the catcher has the ball and is in contact with the home plate before the runner reaches the safety home plate. There are no tag plays at the plate.
8. If a base runner passes the commitment line (20' from home plate), then returns to 3B, they will be called out.
9. If a base runner crosses the batter's box home plate, they will be called out and the ball remains live.
10. If a base runner runs down the "traditional" foul line and interferes with the fielder taking the throw at the plate, the ball is dead and the runner is out.

### Roster

1. A roster must consist of no more than 15 players and a minimum of 10. A team must start with at least 10 players. If one is lost to injury, the team may continue to play, but anytime that athlete is due up to bat an out will be declared. If a team loses another player and has 8 or fewer available, the game is forfeited. The teams may finish out the game, but it will be recorded as a forfeit.
2. Each team will be comprised of the following defensive infield positions: Pitcher, catcher, 1st base, 2nd base, 3rd

base, and shortstop. The defensive outfield will be comprised of 4 players. Outfielders must play a minimum of 3m (9' 10 ¼") behind the infielders.

3. An eleventh player can be used in the game. This player is called an Extra Hitter or EH. The EH must play the entire game and must bat in the same batting position for the entire game. You may substitute for the EH and place him/her in any defensive position, but the sub will bat in the same position. The original EH may re-enter the game. A sub for the EH can be anyone who has not already played in the game. If the EH leaves the game without a sub, an out will be called when the EH comes up to bat. You must inform the umpire and the opposing team before the game begins if you choose to use an EH. If an EH is used, 11 must bat and 10 may play defense.
4. A position player removed from the game due to substitution (not injury) may return to the game one time as a substitute but will not be allowed to re-enter the game if substituted for a second time. Players who bat in a position in the batting order other than the one previously occupied by the player they are replacing will be declared out.
5. Players who are ejected can be replaced with a substitute.

## Rules of the Game

1. The ball must be pitched in an underhand motion and should travel in an arc no less than 6 feet and no more than 12 feet.
2. **Each batter will begin with one ball and one strike count. This also applies to Unified but not T-ball.**
3. Four balls constitute a walk and three strikes constitute an out. If the batter has two strikes and fouls off the third pitch the batter will be declared out.
4. The Infield Fly Rule will be in effect when there are less than two outs and a force out at third or home-plate. Any ball popped up in the infield which can be caught with ordinary effort (by either an infielder/outfielder) will be called an infield fly and the batter will be out. The runners may advance at their own risk. If the ball is caught they must tag up. If the ball is not caught they do not need to tag up. This call is considered an umpire's judgment and cannot be protested.
5. If a ball leaves the playing area on an overthrow, it is considered a dead ball, and play stops immediately. Any base runner will be awarded two bases... the base the player is running to at the time of the throw plus the following base.
6. While running the bases, athletes cannot be physically pulled or pushed to run in a certain direction by a coach. If a coach touches or encourages a player with physical actions, the player will be declared out. If incidental contact occurs, there will be no action taken against the player.
7. When there is a close play at a base, the runner should make all attempts to avoid unnecessary contact. Sliding is encouraged during plays but not required. If a base runner runs over a defensive player the runner may be ejected (umpire's decision).
8. Substitutions can be made whenever time is called. Starting players may leave and re-enter the game. This is allowed one time with the players occupying the same position in the batting lineup. The starting player may only re-enter the game for the person who substituted for him/her. Substitutes may re-enter the game in the same manner.
9. Two base coaches are allowed for the offensive team, one in the first base coaches' box and one in the third base coaches' box. Both coaches must remain in the box while their team is at bat.
10. Protests are not allowed on judgment calls – only on rule interpretations.
11. Umpires have the power to make all decisions on the playing field. If a protest is made, it shall be brought to the Softball Rules Committee who will then make a final decision. A protest may only be made if it questions the ap-

plicability of the rules. No protest will be considered which pertains to any judgment call made by an umpire.

## **Rules Specific to Coach Pitch**

1. A coach from the team batting will do the pitching for their team. However, the defensive team will still field an athlete in the pitcher position. The coach pitcher does not field, but they can defend themselves. A dead ball will be declared if the ball contacts the coach and the batter and runners will be awarded one base; however, it's the umpire's discretion on awarding the base if he/she deems the coach could not get out of the way.
2. All other rules in coach pitch softball are the same as slow pitch softball.
3. Athletes in Coach Pitch who are unable to hit a pitched ball are allowed to use a tee.
4. Only athletes that have been properly registered as needing T-Ball assistance are allowed to use a tee during competition. Athletes may not switch between coach pitch and tee during the same at bat. Athletes may switch between at bats.
5. Teams may only register half their roster for T-Ball assistance.

## **T-Ball Rules**

1. A 45-foot neutral zone arc will be marked from the first baseline to the third baseline. If a ball does not cross this arc it is considered a foul ball. Players can rush the ball if it is moving, but if the ball stops forward movement before reaching the neutral zone arc, it is a foul ball.
2. A coaches' circle will be located beyond the 2nd base. One coach from the defensive team will be allowed to stand in this circle while his team is on the field.
3. A batting tee will be placed directly on the home plate. A coach from the batting team will adjust the tee to fit the batter. This will be one of the two coaches occupying the coaches' boxes on either 1st baseline or 3rd baseline. Once the tee is adjusted, the coach should return to the coaches' box.
4. To start play, the catcher will place the ball on the tee and the umpire will say "play ball" at which time the batter will step into the batter's box and hit the ball.
5. The batter must hit the ball between the foul lines and beyond the neutral zone arc to be ruled a fair ball. If the batted ball does not leave the neutral zone, and the defensive player does not touch it, the ball will be called a foul ball.
6. A Strike Out is registered when a. The batter swings three times and missed the ball b. The batter has two strikes and fouls off the third attempt. (Batters in this division do not start with 1 strike)
7. The defensive players must stand behind the neutral zone arc before the ball is hit. Once hit, they can move into the neutral zone to field the ball. If they touch a moving ball in the neutral zone it will be called a fair ball.
8. A regulation game consists of 6 innings. A new inning will not begin after 50 minutes.
9. The batting team's half of the inning shall end when three outs have been made or the line-up batting order is complete. (to clarify: line-up refers to those players listed as playing in the game NOT all the players listed on the roster)
10. After a ball is hit into fair territory and the batter has left the batter's box, the umpire shall remove the tee from home plate and set it in foul territory

## **Unified Softball Rules**

1. There must be a minimum of 10 players and a maximum of 16 players on a roster. There must also be an equal num-

ber of athletes and Unified Partners.

2. A line-up must consist of 5 athletes and 5 Unified Partners. Teams must start a game with 10 players. If a player is lost to injury, a team may continue to play, but anytime that athlete is due up an out will be declared. If a team loses another player (8 or fewer players are available) the game is forfeited. The game can be completed but will be recorded as a forfeit.
3. If a team has fewer than 10 players, there must be an equal number or more athletes than Unified Partners in the field.
4. If a team is using the EH, there must be 12 batting team members (6 athletes and 6 UP's) in alternating order. Ten of these players must play defense. EH's must remain in the same batting position throughout the game but subs can be made.
5. Athletes and Unified Partners must alternate and the order must remain the same.
6. In the Junior Unified Division only, athletes and unified partners may use a tee when batting.
7. Players must fill the following defensive positions:  
Infield: two athletes and two Unified Partners  
Outfield: two athletes and two Unified Partners  
Pitch/Catcher: one athlete and one Unified Partner
8. Athletes can hit a limit of two over-the-fence (OTF) home runs per team per game. All OTF home runs thereafter hit by an athlete will be an out. OTF home runs hit by Unified Partners will be enforced as ground-rule doubles. These will count toward the two OTF home run limit.
9. Unified Partners are limited to a double at each at bat (no home runs or triples).
10. Both Athletes and Unified Partners who are on base when a home run (both OTF and inside the park) may advance at their own risk. There is no base limit in these situations.
11. Unified Partners that are walked when at bat are only allowed to advance to 1st base and the athlete following them in the batting order will have their "at bat".
12. Each team shall have a NON PLAYING coach responsible for the lineup and the conduct of their team during competition. Coaches shall take appropriate measures to prevent any player from dominating the game. Coaches shall warn any athlete and Unified Partner whose play is deemed dangerous. Subsequent dangerous play shall result in disqualification from the game.
13. **Each batter will begin with one ball and one strike count.**

## **Individual Skills Competition**

Athletes will be assessed in the following areas: Base Running, Throwing, Fielding and Hitting. The final score is determined by adding together the scores achieved in each of these four events.

### **Base Running**

1. The athlete is instructed to start in the batter's box, and run around the bases as fast as possible, touching each base in order and finishing at the safety home plate.
2. The base runner will wear a batting helmet while running bases (to be consistent with team softball rules)
3. The best score of two trials is recorded.

## **Throwing**

1. The athlete throws the ball from behind the restraining line as far and straight as possible without crossing the line.
2. The athlete has two attempts.
3. The better of the two throws is measured and recorded as the player's score.
4. If a player steps on or over the line before releasing the ball, the trial must be repeated. There will be a maximum of two repeats.

## **Fielding**

1. The athlete will stand between and behind two cones. The athlete may move aggressively toward the ball. If the thrown ball is outside of the cones, the throw must be repeated.
2. Each athlete gets five fielding attempts per trial.
3. Each athlete receives two trials.

## **Hitting**

1. The athlete will stand in a batter's box and hit the ball off the tee.
2. The athlete must wear a batting helmet.
3. The athlete will have 3 attempts to hit the ball as far as possible.

## **Sportsmanship**

1. Put forth maximum effort during each event.
2. Practice the skills with the same intensity as you would perform them in competition.
3. Always finish a game/event. Never quit.
4. Always comply with the rules.
5. Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play at all times.
6. Respect the decision of the officials at all times.