



Special Olympics
South Dakota
Athletics Handbook

January 1, 2026



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Coaching Guides and Resources link.....	2
General Information on Uniforms and Eligibility.....	3
Track Events.....	3
Event Restrictions.....	4
General Track Rules.....	4
Assisted Walking Events.....	5
Wheelchair Events (Motorized and Non-motorized).....	6
Motor Activity Training Program Track Events (MATP).....	6
Field Events.....	7
General Field Event Rules.....	7
Motor Activity Training Program (MATP).....	10
Pentathlon.....	10
Divisioning.....	11
Awards.....	11
Sportsmanship.....	11

Practice ideas, skill assessment and development, and rules can be found in the SOI Quick Start Guides and SOI Rules for each respective sport at <https://www.specialolympics.org/what-we-do/sports/sports-offered?locale=en>



Special Olympics South Dakota Athletics Handbook

GENERAL INFORMATION ON UNIFORMS AND ELIGIBILITY

- Athletes must wear close-toed athletic shoes in all events.
- Athletes may wear track cleats.
- Uniforms should include a team shirt, athletic shorts/sweats with a drawstring but NO JEANS.
- SOSD Uniform/graphic guidelines can be found at the following link:
<https://sosd.org/storage/2025/10/Sub-Program-Guideline-Refresher.pdf>
- Appropriate uniforms are required for both area and state competition.
- Area participation is a requirement to be eligible for state competition.

TRACK EVENTS

SOSD Official Track Events:

100 Meter Dash	3000 Meter Run
200 Meter Dash	4 x 100 Meter Relay (traditional or unified)
400 Meter Dash	4 x 400 Meter Relay (traditional)
800 Meter Run	
1500 Meter Run	

MATP Events: 10 Meter Race, 25 Meter Race, Tennis Ball Throw

Pentathlon (100 M, 800 M, Running Long Jump, High Jump, Shot Put)

The Pentathlon event will not be held at state unless there are a minimum of 3 participants. Likewise, if there aren't 3 participants statewide it will not be held as an area event either. (2026)

Track events for those athletes with lower ability levels:

50 Meter Dash	10 Meter Assisted Walk
50 Meter Walk	25 Meter Assisted Walk
	50 Meter Assisted Walk

MATP Track Events:

10 Meter Race
25 Meter Race

Wheelchair Events:

100 Meter Wheelchair Race (motorized and non-motorized)
200 Meter Wheelchair Race (motorized and non-motorized)

Wheelchair events for those athletes with lower ability levels:

10 Meter Race (motorized and non-motorized)
25 Meter Race (motorized and non-motorized)
30 Meter Slalom Race (motorized and non-motorized)
4 x 25 Meter Wheelchair Relay

EVENT RESTRICTIONS

- Athletes may compete in three individual events and one relay event.
- Three individual events are defined as any combination of: 1 field event/2 running events OR 2 field events/1 running event.
- MATP Events include: 10 M Race, 25 M Race, MATP Tennis Ball Throw
- Athletes entered in MATP events are not eligible to participate in any other individual or relay events.
- Athletes entered in the Pentathlon are also eligible to do one relay.
- **The Pentathlon will not be held at area or state events unless there are a minimum of 3 participants.**

General Track Rules:

- Standard Track Dimensions: 400 Meters = 1 lap; 800 Meters = 2 laps.
- Races 400 meters or below, the commands of the starter shall be —"on your marks," —"set," and, when all competitors are set, the whistle will be blown/signal given.
- Coaches must stay off the track during races.
- Coaches/chaperones/volunteers are not allowed to run alongside a runner on the infield of the track.
- In races 800 meters or longer, the commands shall be —"on your marks" and, when all competitors are steady, the whistle will be blown/signal given. A competitor shall not touch the ground with their hand(s).
- In races up to and including the 400 M, the athletes have the option of using or not using blocks.
- 100 M, 200 M, 400 M races and assisted and wheelchair races: Competitors should remain in their assigned lanes for the duration of their race.
- The starter shall give each competitor a chance to do his/her best by:
 - Giving the competitors ample time to settle down after taking their marks
 - Starting the sequence over if any runner is off-balance
 - Not holding the runners too long after the set signal
- If a competitor is pushed or forced by another person to run or walk outside their lane, and if no material advantage is gained, the competitor should not be disqualified.
- During walking events, athletes must have one foot in touch with the ground at all times.
- Races: Athletes must abide by the rules of the event in which they are entered. Walk, run, or wheelchair. An athlete may be disqualified if they run in a walk event or run outside of their lane and impede the progress of another runner.
- DISQUALIFICATIONS: Any athlete who is disqualified in a track event will receive a participation ribbon and not a place ribbon in his/her respective division.

General Rules for Blind and Deaf Athletes

- A rope or sighted guide runner may be provided to assist athletes who are visually impaired.
- Rope or sighted guide runner must be provided by the delegation.
- Ropes may only be used for races 100m. Contact local Program Manager for questions.
- A sighted guide runner may not be ahead of the athlete in any manner. At no time may the guide runner pull the athlete or propel the athlete forward by pushing.
- A tap start will be used for an athlete who is both deaf and blind.

50 Meter Walk:

- This event provides meaningful competition for athletes with lower ability levels.
- This event will be conducted on the straightaway.
- All athletes shall start from behind the starting line and completes this race when his/her torso crosses the finish line.

- An athlete shall be disqualified if he/she interferes, obstructs or gains an advantage over another competitor.
- One foot must be in touch with the ground at all times in walking events. Disqualification will result if an athlete runs at any point in this event. Participation ribbon not a place ribbon is awarded to those athletes who are disqualified.

50 Meter Dash and 100 Meter Dash:

- Will be conducted on the straightaway.
- All athletes shall start from behind the starting line. An athlete completes this race when his/her torso crosses the finish line.
- An athlete shall be disqualified if he/she interferes, obstructs or gains an advantage over another competitor.

200 Meter Dash, 400 Meter Dash, 800 Meter Run, 1500 Meter Run & 3000 Meter Run

- 200 and 400 Meter Races: Will be conducted on an oval track, in lanes for entire race, with staggered starts.
- 800 Meters: Runners will start in their assigned lanes through the first turn and break toward lane one at the break line which is marked after the first turn.
- 1500 Meters or greater: A waterfall start is used. Athletes may cut as soon as they have space to not interfere with another athlete.

Relays (4 x 100 Meter Relay, 4 x 400 Meter Relay)

- Each relay will consist of 4 team members. No one athlete can do more than one leg.
- Competition age groups will consist of: 15 & under, 16-21, 22 & over. Age groups divisions will be either male or female. Coed teams will be combined with the male divisions.
- The age group division of the team is determined by the oldest member of the team.
- UNIFIED 4 x 100 RELAY:
 - Teams shall consist of two athletes and two partners.
 - Runners on a relay team may be assigned to run in any order.
 - RECOMMENDATION: Have athlete run in 4th position so they can cross the finish line.
- Athletes cannot enter more than one relay event.
- Relay Registration forms must be completed for EACH team you enter
- Races will be conducted on an oval track, in lanes, using staggered starts.
- The baton passing zone will be 20 meters long and the passing of the baton to a succeeding team member must take place within the prescribed passing zone and in the assigned lane.
- The baton must be handed (passed) to the succeeding team member. Throwing is prohibited.
- A dropped baton must be retrieved by the team member who dropped it, unless both team members are in the passing zone. In this case, the baton may be retrieved by either team member.
- If a baton is dropped and goes into another lane, the person who dropped it must be the one to pick it up and then return to the assigned lane to pass the baton to his/her teammate. They cannot interfere with another team while retrieving the baton. If this happens, the team is disqualified.
- This rule also applies if a relay runner drops the baton while running, he/she may pick it up and return to his/her lane and continue running. If he/she interferes with another team, then they are disqualified.

Assisted Walks (10 Meters, 25 Meters, 50 Meter)

- Athletes must provide their own assisted walking devices. Assisted devices may consist of canes, crutches or walker.
- Mark the start and finish lines 10, 25 and 50 meters apart, respectively
- Each athlete may use 2 lanes as his/her lane.
- Place cones on start and finish lines, 2.44 meters apart, to create start and finish gates for each lane.

- Create lanes by using cones or chalk lines down the track between the start and finish lines.
- Guidelines (ropes) or bells may be used for blind or visually impaired athletes, respectively.
- The athlete starts with walking aid behind the start line.
- The athlete may not receive assistance from coaches, officials, etc.
- Athlete is timed from the sound of the starter's whistle or signal to when their torso reaches the perpendicular plane of the nearer edge of the finish line.

Motor Activity Training Program (MATP) Track Events

- Definition: For the athlete who does not yet possess the skills necessary to participate in official Special Olympics track and field events or whose disability is more profound.
- Athletes participating in MATP events are not allowed to enter any other track or field events.
- Athletes are allowed to have a coach assist them as needed to fully participate in the MATP events.
- No athlete will be disqualified.
- All athletes entered in MATP events will receive a 1st place ribbon or medal in each event they participate in.
- Events offered: 10 Meter Race, 25 Meter Race

Wheelchair Events (Motorized and Non-motorized)

- Only athletes who ambulate by use of a wheelchair may participate in these events.
- On the registration form, coaches MUST indicate whether each athlete is using either a motorized or non-motorized chair.
- Athletes entered in the 100 M Wheelchair Race and/or the 200 M Wheelchair Race may not participate in the 10, 25 or 30 M Wheelchair events.
- The lanes for the wheelchair events shall be made two track-lanes wide.
- Athletes shall start with all wheels behind the start line.
- Athlete is timed from the starter's whistle/signal to when all front wheels (two or one) of the wheelchair reach the perpendicular plane of the nearer edge of the finish line.
- Athletes shall not be pushed, pulled or otherwise assisted during these events.
- Each competitor must keep in their assigned lanes from start to finish and may not interfere, obstruct or impede the progress of another competitor. Infractions, at the discretion of the judges, may result in disqualification.
- 4 x 25 M Wheelchair Relay: Four persons make up a team. Each team member will complete 25 M of the relay. The 2nd, 3rd and 4th relay team members may not leave the start line until the front wheels on the wheelchair of the teammate who precedes him/her crosses the take off line 1 M in front and parallel to the starting line. The 4th relay member completes the race when the first two wheels crosses the finish line.

Wheelchair Slalom (Motorized and Non-motorized)

- Course will allow 2 lanes for each athlete. Five cones placed at 5 M intervals in the middle of the lanes.
- The front two wheels of the chair should be behind the starting line and timing stops when the front two wheels have crossed the finish line.
- Athlete maneuvers their chair through the course, going to the right of the first cone and then left of the next one (going in between all cones) and across the finish line without impeding another athlete on the course.
- Knocking down a marker constitutes a violation, and a three-second penalty will be assessed.
- Not completing the designated course in correct manner will result in disqualification and competitor will receive participation ribbon.

FIELD EVENTS

SOSD Official Field Events:

Running Long Jump
High Jump
Shot Put
Mini-Javelin

Field events for athletes with lower ability levels:

Softball Throw
Tennis Ball Throw
Standing Long Jump
MATP Tennis Ball Throw

General Field Events Rules:

- Athletes may enter only one of the following jumping events: running long jump or standing long jump.
- Athletes may enter only one of the following throwing events: shot put, mini-javelin, softball throw or tennis ball throw.
- MATP Tennis Ball Throw – athletes entered in this event cannot enter any other field event. They are also allowed to have whatever assistance is needed to fully participate in this event.
- Coaches must stay out of the competition area during field events competition. The competition areas are designated with flagging/etc and only event volunteers and athletes are allowed inside the flagging. (MATP events are exceptions to this rule)
- Prior to competition, coaches are allowed to be in running long jump and high jump competition areas to assist athletes with getting their “marks” on the runway, as needed.
- Measurements for field events:
 - In the running long jump, standing long jump and throwing events (shot put, mini-javelin, softball throw and tennis ball throw) each athlete shall be allowed three non-consecutive attempts. All three attempts shall be measured and recorded. The longest measurement of the three attempts shall be used for scoring. The athlete’s second best, then third best, attempts shall be used to break ties. Measurements are recorded in meters and centimeters.
- Time requirements to initiate an attempt:
 - For individual field event competitions (long jump, standing long jump, high jump and throws), a competitor shall be charged a foul if the competitor does not initiate and attempt within one minute after the competitor’s name has been called, in addition to a visual indication made by the event judge. For the High Jump, where there are 3 or more athletes remaining in the competition the time shall be one minute. Where there are 2 or 3 athletes remaining in the competition the time shall be one and a half minutes. Where there is only remaining one athlete in the competition the time shall be two minutes.
- Throws: the softball and tennis ball throw are developmental events designed to provide meaningful competition for athletes with lower abilities. Athletes with qualifying scores of 15M and above for the tennis ball throw should be encouraged to compete in the softball throw, mini-javelin or shot put. Athletes with qualifying scores of 24M and above for the softball throw should be encouraged to compete in the mini-javelin or shot put event.
- DISQUALIFICATIONS: Any athlete who is disqualified in a field event will receive a participation ribbon and not a place ribbon in his/her respective division.

Running Long Jump

- In the long jump, an athlete must be able to jump at least 1 meter, which is the minimum distance between the take-off board and the sand pit.
- Athletes shall take off on one foot and land on two feet.
- Distance will be measured from the closest impression in the jumping pit made by any part of the body or limbs to the take-off line for all jumps. Measurements should be read from the take off line and not from the jumping pit.
- If an athlete jumps less than 1M and does not make it to the pit, they will receive a scratch on their attempt (0 score). If they scratch 3 attempts they will receive a participation ribbon.

Standing Long Jump

- A competitor shall jump off both feet on the take-off. They may rock backward and forward lifting his/her heels and toes alternately, but they may not lift either foot completely off the ground.
- Distance will be measured from the closest impression on the landing area made by any part of the body or limbs to the take off line for all jumps.

High Jump

- The competitor shall take off on one foot.
- The minimum opening height for all high jump competitions shall be 1.00 meter.
- Each competitor will have 3 attempts to clear each height and must successfully clear a previous height to advance to the next height.
- Competitors may pass at a height and move to the next height but will only be scored on heights successfully cleared.
- If a competitor breaks the vertical plane of the crossbar, it will be counted as an attempt.
- Competitors shall not dive forward over the bar or take off from a two-footed stance.
- The crossbar should be raised 5 cm after each round.

Shot Put

- The shot may be steel, brass, or a synthetic-covered indoor shot put. Women's and Boys' (8-11 yrs) shot is 3 kg (6.6 lbs). Men's shot is 4kg (8.8lbs). Girls (8-11 yrs) shot is 2 kg (4.4 lbs).
- It is acceptable to include a wheelchair athlete in the regular divisions of the shot put, but the weight of shot must be the same for all competitors.
- A legal put shall be made from within the circle. In the course of an attempt, the athlete, or wheelchair, may not touch the top edge of the stop-board, the top of the iron ring or any surface outside of the circle. It is legal to touch the inside of the stop-board or the iron band.
- Definition of legal put: The competitor enters the ring FROM THE BACK OF THE RING and takes his/her stance to commence a put. The shot shall be put from the shoulder with one hand only. The shot shall touch or be in close proximity to the neck or the chin and the hand shall not be dropped before this position during the action of putting. The shot shall not be taken behind the line of the shoulders. The competitor will exit through the BACK OF THE SHOT PUT RING when his/her attempt is completed.
- The put shall be declared foul and shall not be measured if, after entering the circle and starting the put, the competitor commits any of the following:
 - Uses any method contrary to the definition of legal put
 - Causes the shot to fall on or outside the lines marking the landing vector
- An athlete entering the shot put cannot enter either the softball throw, tennis ball throw or mini jav.

Mini-Javelin

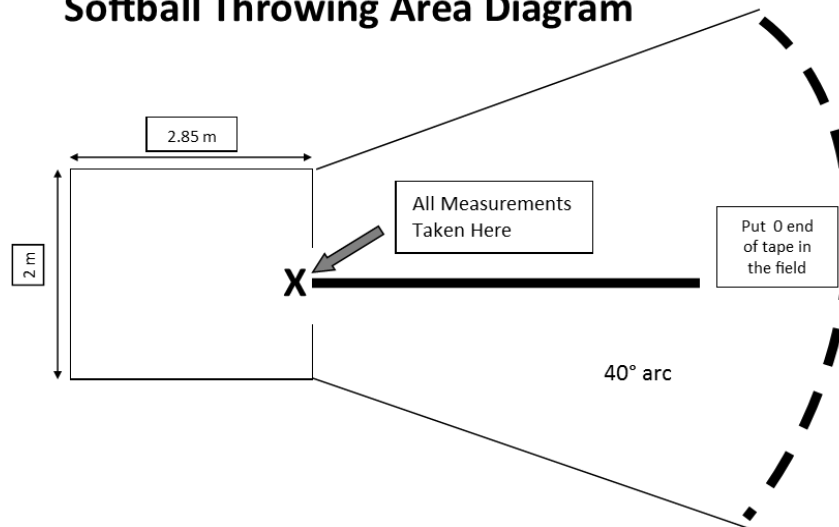
- Mini-javelin implement specifications:
 - The shaft, grip and fins shall be made out of plastic or suitable rigid material
 - The tip shall be made of soft rubber with a blunt, rounded end.
 - The mini-javelin shall have three or four fins. The fins shall be flat (without protrusions or roughness) and shall be perpendicular to the surface of the mini-javelin.

- Minimum weights: 300g for males and females (8-15 years), 300g for female (16+ years) and 400g for males (16+ years)
- <https://www.turbojav.com/products> (recommended website for ordering mini javelins)
- Mini-javelin rules and guidelines for competition
 - The mini-javelin must be held by the grip with one hand.
 - The mini-javelin shall be thrown over the shoulder or upper part of the throwing arm and may not be slung or hurled.
 - At no time shall the competitor turn completely around so that his/her back is towards the throwing area.
 - The measurement of each throw shall be made from where the tip first struck the ground to the inside edge of the arc or barrier.
 - The mini-javelin runway/throwing area shall be consistent with the softball throwing area in size/throwing box/landing sectors. (see softball throwing diagram in the softball section below)
 - Coaching resources for mini javelin can be found at the Special Olympics link listed on page 2 of this document. Follow link to athletics coaching guide->throws->mini-javelin is last event in section.
- It is counted as a foul if any of the following occur:
 - Does not use proper throwing technique.
 - Does not throw the mini-javelin so that the point (tip) lands before any other part of the implement.
 - Does not throw the mini-javelin so that the point (tip) lands completely within the inner edges of the sector lines.
 - If any part of the competitor's body touches the arc or any part of the ground outside the arc/throwing box.

Softball Throw for Distance

- Softball Throw: 30 cm (11 3/4 inches) in circumference softball shall be used.
- Competitors may use any type of throw.
- This throwing event is for athletes who throw the ball 24.39M (80 ft) or less.
- An athlete with a qualifying score more than 24.39 M (80 ft) should be encouraged to enter the shot put or mini-javelin.
- The throwing area should be set up as follows:
 Mark off two parallel lines which are 2.85 meters in length, with each of the ends being 2 meters apart. At the back end of the throwing area, place a mark 0.10 M in length directly in the middle of the two end lines. (This is your pull through point for measurement) From this mark, extend an imaginary parallel line out 3 meters, mark this point, and draw an arc connecting both sidelines which intersect this point. The ball must land within a sector determined by a 40-degree angle emanating from the center of the back line. Extend two lines out which intersect both points where the arc meets the sidelines.

Softball Throwing Area Diagram



Tennis Ball Throw for Distance

- Competition rules are the same as those used in the softball throw.
- Standard tennis ball should be used as the implement.
- This throwing event is for athletes who throw the tennis ball 15.24 M (50 ft) or less.
- An athlete with a qualifying score of more than 15.24 M (50 ft) should be encouraged to enter either the softball throw, mini-javelin or shot put.

Motor Activity Training Program (MATP) Tennis Ball Throw

- Definition: For the athlete who does not yet possess the skills necessary to participate in official Special Olympics track and field events or whose disability is more profound.
- Athletes entered in the MATP Tennis Ball Throw are not eligible to enter any other field event.
- Athletes may receive whatever assistance is necessary to fully participate in this event.
- No athlete will be disqualified.
- All athletes entered in MATP events will receive 1st place ribbons or medals in each MATP event.

PENTATHLON

- The five events comprising the pentathlon are: 100 meter run, running long jump, shot put, high jump and 800-meter run.
- If achieved time or distance is not given in the pentathlon score table, the score for the nearest lesser performance should be recorded.
- Final scores are comprised of scores from all events and awarded as one event.
- Points are awarded on the basis of the Special Olympics pentathlon scoring tables found in the Special Olympics, Inc, Athletics Sport Rules Section 3.10.
- All pentathlon athletes (male and female) will advance through all pentathlon events as a group rather than separating track and field events males/females (morning and afternoon). Running events can be combined on the track so that divisions are competing with each other but those with smaller/one person divisions can run against other pentathletes of similar times but different divisions, regardless of gender, to create a better competitive experience for all.
- The Pentathlon will follow the male track/field schedule.

DIVISIONING

- Coaches need to include an athlete's practice qualifying time and/or distance for each event that an athlete is registering for on the registration form.
- At State, we will division based on an athlete's area results.
- In an attempt to manage the length of the competition, multiple divisions may be on the track at the same time for certain events. Please advise coaches, parents, and spectators of this so there isn't confusion on why an athlete is so much faster or slower than another during a single race, or why an athlete who physically placed fourth in a race may receive a gold medal or first place ribbon.

AWARDS

- **State Awards:** Medals are awarded in each event/division for 1st-3rd place and ribbons are awarded to those placing 4th-8th.
- **Area Awards:** Ribbons are awarded for all places 1st-8th in each event and each division.

SPORTSMANSHIP

Good sportsmanship is both the coach's and athlete's commitment to fair play, ethical behavior and integrity. In theory and practice, sportsmanship is defined as those qualities which are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. Below we highlight a few focus points and ideas on how to teach and coach sportsmanship to your athletes. Lead by example.

Competitive Effort

- Put forth maximum effort during each event.
- Practice the skills with the same intensity as you would perform them in competition.
- Always finish a match/event: Never quit.

Fair Play at All Times

- Always comply with the rules.
- Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play at all times.
- Respect the decision of the officials at all times.