



**Special
Olympics**
Arkansas

Family Handbook



Table of Contents:

Eligibility for Special Olympics.....	3
Divisioning Athletes.....	3
Awards Process.....	4
Determining Quota.....	4
Advancement Criteria.....	4
How to Get Involved.....	5
General Information about Special Olympics Arkansas.....	5
Contact Us.....	5

Eligibility for Special Olympics

Persons are eligible to be a part of Special Olympics if they are:

- Age eight and older
- Have some level of intellectual disability with an IQ of 70 or below or a closely related developmental disability
- Developmental disabilities would include areas of functional limitations, both in general learning and adaptive skills areas
- Children 2.5 & 7 years of age who meet the above requirements are eligible to be a part of the Young Athletes Program

Divisioning Athletes

Special Olympics Arkansas constantly strives to provide positive, rewarding competition experiences for Special Olympics athletes. With this in mind, Special Olympics, Inc. has comprised a process referred to as divisioning. The divisioning process involves gender grouping, age grouping, ability grouping, and division size guidelines.

Ability Grouping

A fair division is one in which all athletes have a reasonable chance to excel and ability is the most important determining factor in divisioning. Athletes should be ranked in descending order of performance based on previous performance records, with the difference in times or scores not exceeding 15% between the highest performing athlete and the lowest. Classification rounds are used for team sports competition, which consists of teams competing in a short version of the official team sport. The 15% variance is not used for gymnastics, figure skating, diving or equestrian. For these events, athletes are still placed in competition divisions that correspond to their ability levels.

Age Grouping

Athletes are divided into age groups for individual and team sports to ensure that competition is as fair as possible. In team events, the age of the oldest team member is used to determine the age group division that the team will be placed in to compete. When there are not enough competitors in a certain age group, the athletes will compete in the next oldest age group. Age groups can be combined to reduce the variance between the highest and lowest scores within a division. The breakout of the ages is as follows:

- 8-11
- 12-15
- 16-21
- 22-29
- 30 & over

Gender Grouping

Athletes are divided into two groups based on their gender - male or female. Female athletes compete among other females, and male athletes against other males. However, teams consisting of coed athletes (male & female) compete in the male division of competition if there are not other coed teams that match their skill level.

Divisioning Athletes (Continued)

Division Size

Divisions consist of a minimum of three and a maximum of eight competitors or teams. Divisions are combined if there are not at least three athletes or teams in a division.

Awards Process

Awards are presented within each division. Area participation ribbons are given to all athletes who compete at area level events such as Qualifiers and Invitationals. During State level competition, medals are presented to the first, second, and third -place winners in each event, and ribbons are given to athletes who finish fourth through eighth. Participation ribbons are presented to athletes who are disqualified from the competition or who do not finish. In the case of a tie, each athlete or team will receive the award of the highest place. Athletes or teams placed after the tied athletes or teams should receive the award for their order of finish, regardless of the tie.

Additionally, in the instance that an athlete or team is mistakenly given the wrong award placement, the athlete or team is entitled to keep the incorrect medal or ribbon, while also accepting the appropriate and correct award placement. In other words, Special Olympics will not ever take back medals or ribbons.

These guidelines set forth are in full compliance with the standards and high ideals set forth by the sports national governing body and the Olympics movement.

Quota: What It Is & How It Works

Quota refers to the number of athletes each local program can bring to state level competitions. Quota is based on several factors including athlete census submitted by local programs, facility capacity, and the budget. The quota system that Special Olympics Arkansas utilizes is based on the athlete census that was provided by the local coordinators in each local program throughout the state. SOAR uses this quota system as the determining factor as to how many athletes per local program are eligible to compete. This system ensures the most fair and accurate allocation of slots.

Each local program will receive a base quota in each sport they participate in. The remainder of the slots will be distributed proportionally based on the program's percentage of total participation for that sport.

For example, if a venue can accommodate 300 athletes and 75 local programs are participating, $75 \times 2 = 150$ slots that are initially distributed. That leaves 150 slots left to distribute. If Local Program X has 5% of the total athletes training in that sport then they will get 5% of the remaining slots. $5\% \text{ of } 150 = 7.5$ (round up) = 8 additional slots plus the initial allocation of 2 = 10 total slots. Any slots returned will be distributed by request or, if necessary, random drawings.

Advancement Criteria

Special Olympics competitions are held at several different levels within the Special Olympics Movement. Competitions occur on the local, area, state, regional, national and worldwide levels.

An athlete is eligible to advance to the next level of competition providing that he/she has:

- Participated in an organized training program in the same sport directed by qualified coaches while following with Special Olympics rules of training and competition that occurs at a level of frequency that provides necessary skill training. Athletes must train for at least 8 consecutive weeks prior to the actual competition.
- Participated in a previous competition in the same sport except when there is no previous competition that has occurred (i.e.: this is the first competition opportunity) OR there was no competition opportunity available.

How you can get involved beyond supporting your Athlete:

- Get involved in your local program as a coach or committee member.
- Volunteer at the next big event.
- Compete alongside a Special Olympics athlete through Unified Sports.
- Have your company/business get involved through sponsorship or volunteering
- Join the Torch Run and help carry the flame for Special Olympics.
- Get your school involved in Project UNIFY.
- Participate in the Polar Plunge for Special Olympics Arkansas.
- Offer your services as a medical professional at our free health screenings through the Healthy Athletes program.

General information about Special Olympics Arkansas:

Facts about Special Olympics Arkansas:

- 1 in every 6 families is touched by Special Olympics through Athletes, Donors, and Volunteers
- Servicing 15,000+ Athletes Statewide
- Special Olympics Arkansas remains 100% FREE to Athletes
- 240 Competitions Statewide
- 20 different Olympic Sports
- 9 Unified Sports
- In addition to Sports Competitions we provide training, health screenings, and leadership programing for Athletes throughout the State.

Special Olympics Impact on the Athlete:

- Gain Self Confidence
- Have more opportunities to socialize with non-disabled peers
- Know what it is like to be part of a social network
- Most athletes compete for 10 plus years
- SO Athletes are 5 times more likely to hold a job or be gainfully employed than their peers who do not participate

Contact us!

For more information on how to stay involved as an active family member with Special Olympics Arkansas, please call 501-771-0222 or visit us on the web at www.specialolympicsarkansas.org.