Local Program Guide

Special Olympics
Southern California
The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic – type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills, and friendships with their families, other Special Olympics Athletes, and the community. Local Programs are the pathway to success in this mission.

A Local Program is a group of athletes and volunteers that are training/competing together in Special Olympics. Local Programs are an official extension of Special Olympics Southern California. Local Programs consist of key leadership volunteers that plan, implement, and oversee programming for athletes under the established policies, practices, and guidance of SOSC staff. Local Programs vary in size and scope. The program may have a few athletes or many athletes. The program may train/compete in just a couple sports or in all 12 sports offered by SOSC.

We realize that quality growth does not happen at Special Olympics World Games or regional conferences. Real growth of the movement can only take place at the local level where athletes first get acquainted with Special Olympics and its representatives, where sports training sessions take place and local competitive events bring the joy of first victories. For this we greatly thank you for your commitment to local programming.

The primary goal of the Local Program Guide is to serve as a basic resource for quality and successful Local Program administration.
Table of Contents

“The Facts” .................................................................................................................. pg. 4

Local Program Profile ......................................................................................................... pg. 5-6

Compliance .......................................................................................................................... pg. 7

Sports Management ............................................................................................................. pg. 8-10

T.E.A.M. .............................................................................................................................. pg. 11
“The Facts”

Special Olympics
Launched in 1968, Special Olympics has become the world’s largest movement dedicated to promoting respect, acceptance, inclusion and human dignity for people with intellectual disabilities through sports. Eunice Kennedy Shriver had a vision that she brought to life starting with a backyard summer camp to today’s movement engaging over 4.5 million athletes in over 170 countries.

Special Olympics Southern California (SOSC)
Special Olympics Southern California is a 501c3 non-profit organization and is accredited by Special Olympics Inc. as one of 52 Special Olympics Chapter Programs in the United States. SOSC was founded in 1969 by Olympic decathlon gold medalist Rafer Johnson. Currently, Special Olympics Southern California serves over 29,000 athletes through the support of 15,000 volunteers from San Luis Obispo County to San Diego County. SOSC is structured into eleven Regions managed through nine Regional Offices and Regional Staff. Special Olympics Southern California’s traditional, community-based program offers sports training and competition in 11 sports in a three-season format.

Fall Sports Season (August – November) Bowling, Soccer, Softball, Tennis, and Volleyball
Spring Sports Season (February – June) Athletics, Basketball, Bocce, Golf, and Swimming
Winter Season (December – March) Floor Hockey

Local Programs are part of the traditional sports program. Special Olympics does offer a variety of other programs such as Young Athletes, Healthy Athletes, School Partnership Program, Unified Sports, Global Messengers and the youth driven initiative – Unified Champion Schools.

SOSC – Los Angeles & San Gabriel Valley Regions
The Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley Regions serves all of the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley Counties. There are nine Areas within the Region with over 4,000 athletes and 700 coaches. Los Angeles & San Gabriel Valley Regional Staff are authorized by SOSC to manage and supervise all Special Olympics programs within its geographical boundaries.

The Region offers a several competitions in each sport season. These competitions are open to all athletes training in their primary sports within the Region.

The Region offers two annual coaches camps providing sports skill training sessions as well as other sport related topics for all volunteer coaches.

There are NO fees charged athletes to participate in Special Olympics!
Local Program Profile

A Local Program has three main components: Athletes, Local Program Coordinator & Key Leadership, and Coaching Staff.

Athletes
- Persons with intellectual disabilities
- Must be a minimum of 8 years of age to train & compete
- Required completion of athlete participation packet
- All ability levels are welcome!

Local Program Coordinator (LPC) & Key Leadership
- Local Program Coordinator will oversee operations of the local program
  * Annual program plan
  * Athlete & Volunteer – recruitment, registration compliance, and communication
  * Training – facilities
  * Competition - transportation, registration
  * Participation in established public awareness & fundraising campaigns
  * Communication with parents/caregivers of athletes in the program
  * Point of Contact for Head Coaches of each sport within the Local Program
  * Point of Contact with SOSC staff
- Local Program Committee structure is encouraged to administer a quality and efficient program. Committee structure should be built to meet the needs of the Local Program. Some suggestions include key leadership volunteers to oversee areas such as: Outreach, Registration Compliance, Sports (facilities, coaches, training), Training/Games Registration (GMS), and Community Awareness/Fundraising.

Coaching Staff
- Special Olympics ratio 1 coach to 4 athletes
- Head Coach
  * Sports experience & knowledge
  * Responsible for season training and competition plan
  * Oversees coaches/team volunteers
  * Maintains a safe and quality experience for all athletes & volunteers
  * Point of Contact for Local Program Coordinator
  * Communicates with parents/caregivers of athletes participating in the sport
- Coach/Team Volunteer
  * Assists Head Coach at training and competition
  * Sports knowledge not required but ability to follow lead of the Head Coach in skill development and training plan
  * Maintains a safe and quality experience for all athletes & volunteers
Local Program Strategies and Tips for Success . . .

Annual Plan
- Working with the Regional Staff, develop a Local Program Plan for the year.
- Identify components of your plan:
  - Recruitment needs, sources and schedule for athletes, coaches and volunteers
  - Sports offered, training and competition schedules
  - Facilities, Uniforms, Equipment
  - Promotion/Public Awareness
  - Budget – Revenues and Expenses
  - Evaluation of program
- All plans and budgets must be approved by the Regional Director and SOSC Headquarters.

Local Program Committee
- Utilize a committee structure to provide the best quality program in the most efficient manner.
- Identify key areas of responsibility such as:
  - Compliance – oversees athlete and volunteer clearance.
  - Outreach – recruits athletes/volunteers, connects the program to the community.
  - Sports – oversees facilities, coaches, equipment, uniforms.
  - Games Management System (GMS) – responsible for entries to rosters/games through GMS computer system.
  - Fundraising/Community Awareness – oversees participation in established fundraising
    - Identify opportunities, oversees any new funding opportunities, works with media for local coverage.
- Establish a committee that best meets the needs of the local program.

Communication
- Communication is essential! Communication with SOSC, athletes, coaches, volunteers, caregivers, and families will be the key to success.
- Be pro-active – plan ahead:
  - Get a jump on the season preparation by hosting a registration night well before the season starts.
  - Distributing training and competition information out early helps everyone plan.
  - Take steps to inform athletes & volunteers of upcoming clearance expiration well before expiration date as not to disrupt their participation.

Games Management System
- The Games Management System (GMS) houses all athlete and volunteer information.
- Rosters and games registration information each season is input into this system.
Compliance

Athlete and Volunteer Policies

Policies and processes have been established to provide the best quality program safeguarding all persons – athletes, volunteers, sponsors, and families. The established guidelines are not in place to hinder participation but to allow for participation. Adherence to these policies and processes will ensure that Special Olympics can continue to provide programs for persons with intellectual disabilities. Violation of these policies and processes can result in termination of involved persons as well as closure of the program.

Athlete Registration and Clearance Process

- All athletes MUST have a current athlete participation form on file at the SOSC headquarters office.
- Athlete participation forms are valid for three years from the doctor’s date on the form.
- The athlete participation form consists of 3 documents:
  - Athlete medical form (one section must be signed by the doctor).
  - Special Olympics release form.
  - Athlete code of conduct.
  - Athletes with down syndrome must complete an atlanto-axial release form if participating in Swimming (diving start & butterfly stroke), or Soccer.
- The original completed form must be mailed to LA/SGV Regional Office. Faxes, scans, and copies can NOT be accepted for processing.
  - Special Olympics LA/SGV Region
    1334 S. Central Ave
    Los Angeles, CA 90021
- Once the forms arrive in the regional office, the LPC will be notified. It takes approx. 5-7 business days for processing and clearance. Once the forms are cleared and entered into the GMS system at headquarters, Regional staff will notify the LPC & the athlete is cleared to train and compete.

Volunteer Registration and Clearance Process

- Volunteers that coach, chaperone, or handle money for Special Olympics must go through the Class A volunteer clearance process. Class A volunteers must be a minimum of 14 years of age. A head coach must be at least 18 years of age.
- The registration is done online and includes a background screen, protective behaviors training, and concussion training. (Other sport trainings may be required depending on the role).
- Once a volunteer has completed the online process, it can take up to two weeks for clearance. Once cleared, Regional staff will notify the LPC & the clearance is valid for 3 years.
Sports Management

Sports Season Prep

- Use the local program annual plan to prepare for the sport season.
- Confirm facilities – all contracts must be submitted to the regional office for completion. This is due to the risk management and insurance issues with the verbiage contained in many of the contracts. Regional office will complete requests for any needed insurance certificates.
- Review uniform and equipment conditions/needs. Communicate with Head Coach on needs for the season. Inform the region of those needs.
- Host a registration night or establish a process so athletes can sign up to let you know what sports they plan to participate in. This will help in planning for enough coach coverage, equipment, facility time, and uniforms. This will also allow for early communication regarding any expired or expiring medical forms during the season.
- Arrange with Regional Office for any facility fees owed – payment options.
- Determine competition opportunities with the Regional Office and communicate with Head Coach.
- Promote upcoming season to all athletes, coaches, volunteers, families, caregivers and community.

Athlete Training

- Athletes should have the opportunity to train 1-2 times per week for 1-2 hours in a sport. Athletes should train a minimum of 6-8 weeks prior to competition.
- Each sport season, an athlete should select a primary sport to train and compete in however they may train in a secondary sport and compete on local/area/regional level if not conflicting with the primary sport.
- All Special Olympics sports are designed to have an opportunity for athletes.
- Athletes should be encouraged to attend training on a regular basis to maximize the experience and eligibility for competition opportunities.
- Training attendance must be kept and submitted to create the season sport roster in GMS.
- Athletes are not required to compete, some may select to only train.
- Athletes should be provided with well-organized and productive training sessions led by a sport knowledgeable coach in a safe quality facility.
- Sports rules and sportsmanship should be part of the training plan.
Coaching Staff

- The coaching staff for each sport may look a little different but should be comprised of key components: Head Coach, Assistant Coaches, and Team Volunteers. All volunteers must have completed the volunteer registration and cleared as a Class A volunteer.
  
- **Head Coach (18+)**
  - Specific sports experience and knowledge mandatory.
  - SOSC Sport Specific Training Required, valid for 3 years (first time must be in person, recertification can be done online).
  - Responsible for season training and competition plan within established guidelines and policies of SOSC.
  - Direct liaison to the Local Program Coordinator.
  - Responsible for all required submissions such as attendance and competition registration.
  - Oversees and directs assistant coaches and team volunteers.
  - Maintains a safe and quality experience for all athletes & volunteers.

- **Coach (16+)**
  - Assists Head Coach with implementation of training and competition plan.
  - Sports knowledge not required but preferred, must be able to follow lead of Head Coach in skill development and training plan.
  - SOSC Sport Specific Training Mandatory, valid for 3 years (first time must be in person, renewal can be done online).
  - Maintains a safe and quality experience for all athletes & volunteers.

- **Team Volunteer (14+)**
  - Sport knowledge preferred but not required, these persons may have experience working with persons with intellectual disabilities more so than sport experience.
  - SOSC Sport Specific Training Recommended, valid for 3 years (first time must be in person, renewal can be done online).
  - This person may be a non-sports type person assisting the Head Coach with such tasks as attendance, competition registration, communication, chaperone, or uniforms/equipment.

- The coaching staff is responsible for the delegation at all training and competition opportunities.

- The coaching staff assess athletes at practice session to provide accurate information (times, distances, scores, levels) for divisioning at competitions. This is a very important detail in providing the best possible competition experience for all athletes. Team sports have skill assessment forms developed for this process. Individual sports utilize actual time, distance, etc for divisioning.
**Competition**

- Special Olympics provides competition for all ability levels and in multiple venues.
- Athletes must be training in the specific sport before they can compete.
- Athletes are only eligible to attend 3 local, area, or regional events per season per primary sport. They can only attend in a secondary sport if there is room at the event.
- Athletes/Teams are divisioned for competition based on age, gender, and ability.
- Special Olympics and National Governing Body rules are followed for each sport.
- Competition opportunities are offered at many levels. When moving up through the levels, please note that the number of athletes significantly decreases.
  - Scrimmages are events that may be conducted to include two or more teams from a Local Program or Area. These events do not qualify athletes for advancement in their sport, but simply serve as another competition opportunity. Examples: scrimmages, dual meets, pick-up games, invitational. Organizer: Coach or Local Program Coordinator (LPC).
  - Local events are conducted within specific Local Program or Area geography. These events serve as qualifiers to advance to Chapter-level competition. Examples: Area and Local Program games and competitions. Organizer: Area or Local Program staff.
  - Regional events include athletes from the entire Region and are qualifiers for athletes to advance to Chapter level competition. Organizer: Regional staff.
  - Divisional events are hosted by a Division and include athletes from multiple Regions within specific SOSC Divisions (North, Central, South). These events serve as qualifiers to advance to Chapter-level competition. Organizer: Regional Staff (Proposed addition to levels of competition).
  - Chapter events showcase the skills and accomplishments of Special Olympics athletes, and therefore, athletes must be well-trained. SOSC offers competition in 11 sports. SOSC conducts three major chapter events annually including Fall Games, Summer Games and Floor Hockey Championship. Organizer: HQ staff.
  - USA Games are offered every four years. Each chapter of the US sends a delegation based on an allotment from Special Olympics North America (SONA). The next USA Games will be held in 2018.
  - World Games are offered every two years on an alternating between Winter Games and Summer Games. The next World Summer Games will be in 2019, 2023, etc., and World Winter Games in, 2017, 2021, etc. Athletes from Chapters in the United States represent the Special Olympics USA team. SOSC sends a delegation based on an allotment from SONA.

- Local, Area, LA/SGV Regional & SOSC Events – Please see the Season Competition Calendar for an updated list of events.
- Accurate attendance records that create the season sport rosters are essential for the allotment process to SOSC Chapter competitions. These sport rosters are used to help determine the allotments given to each Area/Region.
T.E.A.M – Together Everyone Accomplishes More

Community Awareness
- Local Programs are the face of Special Olympics within the local communities.
- Participate in community events to increase awareness, promote inclusion, and spread the word!
- Conduct outreach activities to recruit new athletes, volunteers, and sponsors.
- The regional office will assist with community outreach.
- Utilize community events as opportunities to showcase athletes and their sports skills.
- Partner with local sports programs to enhance the experience for all.

Finance & Fundraising
- Special Olympics is a non-profit organization funded through donations, fundraising efforts, grants, and Law Enforcement Torch Run efforts.
- Local Programs are financially responsible for actively promoting SOSC development campaigns such as Vons promotions and Tip-A-Cop events.
- Additional fundraising efforts are certainly welcome. Please work through the regional office when developing these additional programs and to get approval.
- Encourage donations and in-kind support from the local community.
- All local program expenses must be approved first and needs are budgeted for annually. Budgeting and expense management is done through the regional office.

Athlete Leadership
- Consider creating an athlete advisory council to help with annual plan, encouraging athlete input.
- Identify athletes that could train and serve as Global Messengers to speak on behalf of SOSC.

Youth Involvement
- One of a community’s greatest resources is its youth. Encourage and engage youth leaders in the local program. Work with them to serve as assistant coaches, work on fundraising efforts, and engage their peers in inclusion, acceptance, and tolerance activities.

Special Olympics Branding
- Special Olympics has 95% brand recognition in the United States and this is important for continued growth, success, and continuity.
- ALL use of the Special Olympics logo MUST be approved through the regional office. There are specific guidelines involving the use, structure, and presentation of the logo. This includes all published materials, uniforms, banners, etc.
LA/SVG Regional Staff

- Below is a breakdown of who to contact within the LA/SVG Regional Staff

  ▪ Teresa Borunda - Senior Manager, Sports & Programs
    Responsible for: Starting new programs, Uniform & Equipment Orders, Transportation Assistance, and Oversees Sports Department.
    TBorunda@sosc.org | 562-502-1114

  ▪ Rachel Pittock - Manager, Sports
    Responsible for: All LA/SVG Sport Competitions, Competition Registration, Facility Contracts, Coaches Trainings, and Games Management Team.
    RPittock@sosc.org | 562-502-1123

  ▪ Christina Aulicino - Coordinator, Sports & Programs
    Responsible for: Oversees all season communications to local programs (rosters, practice information, etc.), Processes & places all athletes, and Oversees Champion Schools Programs.
    CAulicino@sosc.org | 562-502-1091

  ▪ Shantel Fair - Manager, Volunteers
    Responsible for: Oversees all volunteer communications (expiring volunteers, expiring coaches certs, etc.), Processes & places all volunteers, and Oversees all Volunteers for LA/SVG Region events.
    SFair@sosc.org | 562-502-1085

  ▪ Kelly Sheehy – Manager, Development
    Responsible for: All LA/SVG Fundraising Events, All LA/SVG LETR Events, Athlete Leadership, and Social Media.
    KSsheehy@sosc.org | 562-502-1071