

Organize, Coach, Compete

From Leonid Strolin, Special Olympics Global Messenger

A local Special Olympics Program is like a family. Local Programs provide opportunities for us (the athletes) to communicate, meet, make friends and practice together. Local Special Olympics Programs help create potential for improvement of sports results and achievements.



Each athlete has his/her own potential destiny. Increasing numbers of local programs will help girls and guys feel better and more comfortable. They will have a place to go and do and have something to do. They will know what people will think and help them. Special Olympics is like a pyramid, with local programs working as its foundation.

Ready! Set! Go!

Special Olympics has always actively promoted the idea of innovative quality growth involving Special Olympics programs throughout the world. Real growth in the movement can only take place at the local level, where our 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.

Local programs create ongoing opportunities for Special Olympics athlete involvement and greater athlete satisfaction, which are critical to Special Olympics growth.

To help you start or grow a successful local Special Olympics Program, the guide covers three major functions of Special Olympics programming that you need to know to be successful.



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Special Olympics Overview

Mission

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for all 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 friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community

Philosophy

Special Olympics Wyoming is founded on the belief that people with Intellectual disabilities can, with proper instruction and encouragement, learn, enjoy and benefit from participation in individual and team sports, adapted as necessary to meet the needs of those with Intellectual disabilities.

Special Olympics Wyoming believes that consistent training is indispensable to the development of sports skills and that competition among those with equal abilities is the most appropriate means of testing those skills, measuring progress and providing incentives for personal growth.

Vision

Special Olympics vision is to be an unprecedented global movement which through sports training and competition improves the lives of people with Intellectual disabilities and, in turn the lives of everyone they touch. Special Olympics is committed to becoming a worldwide movement, lead by athletes, and to changing the attitudes of every person on Earth.



Special Olympics Athletes

A Special Olympics standard and expectation is that every Special Olympics athlete (8 years if age or older) participates in a minimum of 8 weeks of training per sport before competing in an Olympic-style competition which includes opening, awards and closing ceremonies.

A Special Olympics athlete is a person with an intellectual disability, 8 or older who trains in a Special Olympics sport and who competes at least once in a Special Olympics Games or competition at any level during the calendar year.

Special Olympics Sports & Competition

All Special Olympics competitions follow the rules published in the Official Special Olympics Summer and Winter Rules available from the Special Olympics web site at www.specialolympics.org; click on “compete” and then on “Sports Rules”. Special Olympics rules generally follow the rules adopted by the international sports federations or national sports governing bodies.

Special Olympics Sports offered

Twenty-six Olympic-type sports are officially offered by Special Olympics (see list below~ sports offered in Wyoming are italicized).

Special Olympics also offers the Motor Activities Training Program (MATP). MATP refers to activities for individuals with intellectual disabilities with significant physical needs who are not ready to participate in Special Olympics sports training and competition activities and who participate in MATP activities.

Special Olympics Unified Sports® brings together athletes with and without intellectual disabilities (Unified Sports partners) to train and compete together.

Aquatics

Athletics

Badminton

Basketball

Bocce

Bowling

Cricket

Cycling

Equestrian

Floor Hockey

Football (Soccer)

Golf

Gymnastics

Judo

Power Lifting

Roller Skating

Sailing

Softball

Table Tennis

Team Handball

Tennis

Volleyball

Winter Sports

Alpine Skiing

Cross Country Skiing

Figure Skating

Snowboarding

Snowshoeing

Speed Skating





Divisioning

The fundamental difference that sets Special Olympics competitions apart from those of other sports organizations is that athletes of all ability levels are encouraged to participate and every athlete is recognized for his or her performance. Competition is structured so that athletes compete with other athletes of similar ability in equitable divisions

Ability Grouping

In Special Olympics, every effort is made to place athletes in divisions where their performance ability is no more than 15 percent higher or lower than others in the same division; this placement process is called divisioning. The 15 percent guidelines give all athletes a reasonable chance for success. Divisioning is possible because of skills assessments established in each sport that allow coaches to test, score and division their athletes prior to competition.

Ideally, Individuals and teams are placed in divisions of no less than three competitors. Divisioning shall never exceed eight athletes or teams.

Age Grouping

To provide the safest and most meaningful competitive experience, athletes are placed in competitions against athletes who are as close in age to them as possible.

Gender Grouping

When appropriate, athletes are also divided by gender and compete on male or female teams.

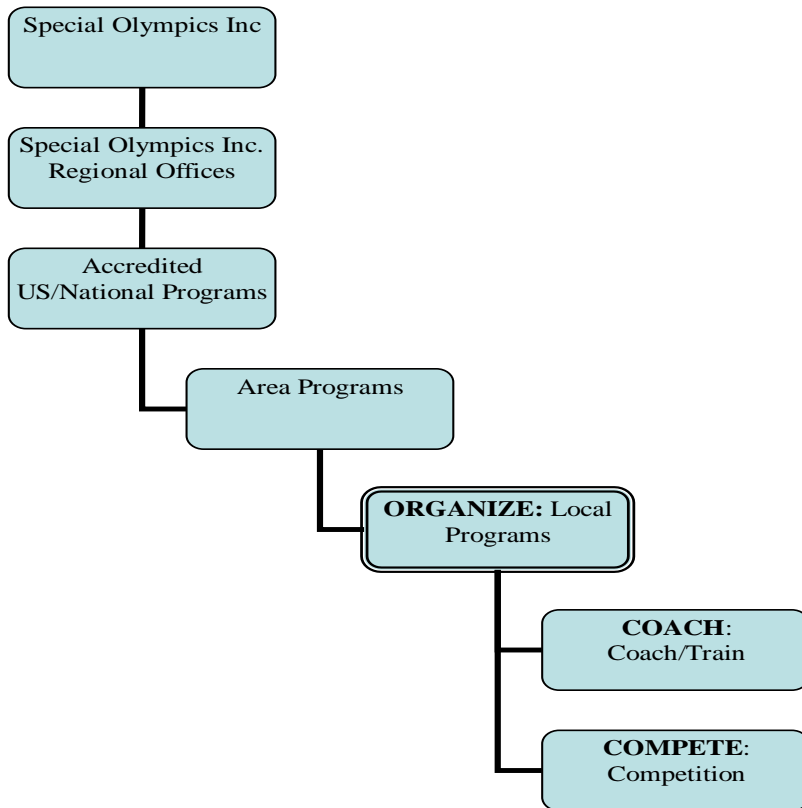
Awards

Awards are an important part of Special Olympics competition. Special Olympics believes in recognition of each individual's efforts. Medals should be given for first through third place and ribbons signifying each athlete's place of finish for fourth

through eight place. At the local level of competition, 1st-8th place ribbons may be used. There is an official supplier of awards for Special Olympics.

Organizational Chart

Structure



The Special Olympics movement has several levels of management that are important. **Special Olympics Inc.** oversees the program globally and governs accreditation, licensing, strategic planning and the Special Olympics general and sports rules.



Special Olympics Wyoming is independently registered as a not for profit and has its own board of directors. An accredited Program means any U.S. or National Program accredited by Special Olympics to organize and conduct Special Olympics training and competition programs within a particular jurisdiction. Special Olympics Programs maintain control over the assets and operations of area and local programs.

Special Olympics **Local Programs** offer training and competition opportunities according to Special Olympics rules and guidelines. Local programs create ongoing opportunities for Special Olympics athlete involvement and greater athlete satisfaction, which are critical to Special Olympics growth



Local Program Management Model

Local Programs can vary in size and scope, yet they must always provide the basic direct service of sports training and competition to athletes. Local programs are Special Olympics direct service outlets. To qualify as a Special Olympics local program, any entity must fulfill three basic functions:

Organize, Coach and Compete

1. **Organize:** General and administrative local program management

- a. Ensure Special Olympics mission and philosophy are effectively carried out.
- b. Expand opportunities for persons with intellectual disabilities.
- c. Leadership and guidance in sport program development. Work with local sports community to support quality sports training and competition
- d. Oversight or administrative tasks such as athlete registration, data collection, public relations activities, local fundraising events, volunteer registration and management.
- e. Liaison and link to area and state program to ensure maximum benefit to athletes.

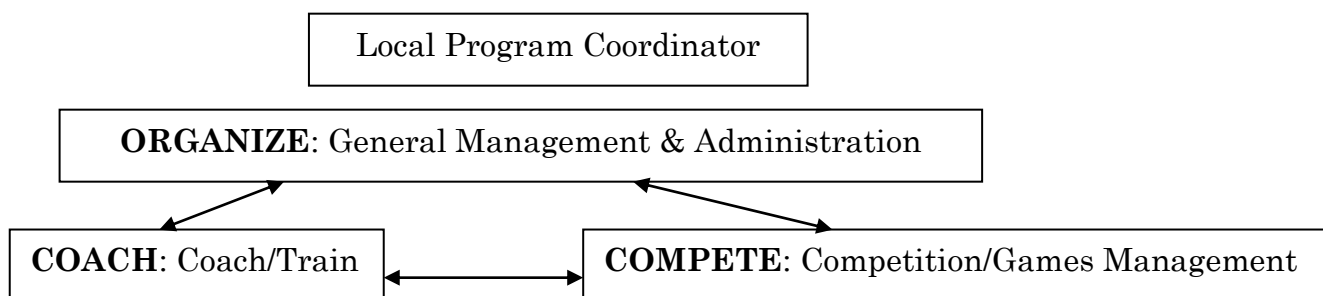
2. **Coach:** Training and Coaching

- a. Conduct frequent high quality sports training for athletes provided by well-trained coaches in preparation for competitions.
- b. Include registration of athletes with Special Olympics Wyoming.

3. **Compete:** Conduct and participate in events

- a. Conduct local competitions

b. Participate in area and state events



Organize, Coach and Compete

Step 1: Identify Leadership

- Get in touch with Special Olympics Wyoming staff and get included in their communication system.
- One, two or three people responsible for each of the three key functions
 - **Organize:** General management & administration _____
 - **Coach:** Training and coaching athletes _____
 - **Compete:** Competition and games management _____

Step 2: Plan your local Program operations

- Determine your planning timeline:
 - Single sports season
 - One calendar year
- Identify components of your plan
 - Recruitment needs, sources and schedule for athletes, coaches and volunteers
 - Sports training and competition schedule
 - Fundraising and donation of goods and services
 - Public Relations
 - Budget

Step 3: Recruit and register coaches

- Identify your needs based on athlete interest (example: We need a track & field coach, basketball coach and swim coach)
- Determine potential sources
 - School
 - Recreation Center/Commission
 - Family members
 - Other
- Establish contacts, acknowledge your needs, and recruit coaches

- Visit <http://www.specialolympics.org> for Special Olympics Coaches and Sports Skills guides.

Step 4: Conduct initial athlete recruitment and registration

- Recruitment is done by all local program representatives
 - Coaches
 - School (be aware of confidentiality)
 - Families
 - Others
- Initial athlete and coach recruitment efforts are closely coordinated to match athletes' interests and needs with coaches' availability and skills.
- Complete registration process (all information should be completed before training begins)
 - Athletes: Application for Participation and Consent Form
 - Coaches: Volunteer Registration Form and fingerprinting

Step 5 Train Coaches

- Coaches trainings are offered by Special Olympics Wyoming annually and typically cover:
 - Special Olympics Mission and Philosophy
 - Coaching Special Olympics athletes
 - Rules
 - Divisioning
 - Expectations
 - How to identify and foster athlete leaders
 - Sport-specific techniques

Step 6 Establish Relationships

Some of the key partners of a local program can include:

- Schools
 - Get Into It™
 - Unified Sports®
- Families
- Community
 - Colleges
 - Religious institutions
 - Other community organizations
- Others

Step 7

- Conduct athlete training



Step 8

- Compete

Step 9 Evaluate Program

- Collect and organize data
- Complete any requirements of the organization
- Seek athlete input

