

# SPECIAL OLYMPICS VIRGINIA POLICY MANUAL

## PROGRAM

**POLICY: The mission, philosophy and official rules of Special Olympics, Inc. shall guide all program activities of Special Olympics Virginia.**

### **Standard 1:** Athlete eligibility

Special Olympics training and competition is open to every person with an intellectual disability (mental retardation or closely related cognitive delay) who is at least eight years of age. Children ages 6 – 7 may participate in training and other non-competition activities. Children ages 2 – 7 may participate in the Young Athletes Program. There is no maximum age limit for participation in Special Olympics.

- The program is open to all eligible participants without fee.
- Every athlete who is training and competing in Special Olympics must have valid Special Olympics Virginia Participation and Release Forms on file in the SOVA office. Every athlete in the Young Athletes Program must have a Young Athletes Registration Form on file in the SOVA office. Athletes participating in a school-based program may submit the Virginia High School League's Athletic Participation/Parental Consent/Physical Examination Form with the official SOVA Release Form if they wish to participate in Special Olympics Virginia's community-based programs.
- Athletes training and competing under the umbrella of a school district or other agency that are not participating outside of their school or agency do not need to have Special Olympics Virginia Participation and Release Forms on file. They must, however, be registered with SOVA via a Registered Training Program (RTP) Form.
- No Special Olympics Virginia program may exclude or isolate from participation in any training or competition any athlete who is known to be a carrier of a blood-borne contagious infection or virus, or otherwise discriminate against such athletes solely because of that medical condition.
- Participation is open to all eligible athletes regardless of race, religion, gender or national origin.
- Athletes charged or convicted of a criminal offense are subject to SOVA's Participation Policy.

### Crimes Not Against Another Person (Actions that do not injure or intend to injure another person)

- An athlete charged with or convicted of a misdemeanor crime that is not against another person may participate in Special Olympics Virginia. However, an athlete may be placed on probation or suspended if he/she constitutes a threat to the property or wellbeing of others in the program.
- An athlete charged with a felony crime not against another person may participate in Special Olympics Virginia pending court action. However, an athlete may be placed on probation or suspended if he/she constitutes a threat to the property or wellbeing of others in the program.
- An athlete convicted of a felony crime not against another person will be suspended from Special Olympics Virginia for five years.

### Crimes Against Another Person (Actions that injure or intend to injure another person)

- An athlete charged with a misdemeanor crime against another person may participate in the program on probationary status pending court action. However, an athlete may be suspended if

he/she constitutes a threat to the property or wellbeing of others in the program. During the probationary period, the athlete must be accompanied by a one-on-one volunteer and cannot attend overnight events.

- An athlete convicted of a misdemeanor crime against another person will be suspended from participating in Special Olympics Virginia for two years. After the two year suspension period, the athlete may resume participation on probationary status for two years. While on probationary status:
  - The athlete must be accompanied by a one-on-one volunteer at all times.
  - The athlete may not attend overnight events.
  - The athlete may be expelled if the criminal behavior is ever replicated;
- If, in the opinion of the Board of Directors, the athlete poses a threat to others, he/she may be expelled.
- An athlete charged with a felony crime against another person shall be suspended from Special Olympics Virginia until the court has ruled on his/her guilt or until charges are dismissed.
- An athlete convicted of a felony crime against another person shall be expelled from Special Olympics Virginia and may not rejoin.
- An athlete listed on a State Sex Offender Registry shall be expelled from Special Olympics Virginia and may not rejoin.

## **Standard 2: Volunteer eligibility**

Any person who has made written application on Special Olympics Virginia's Volunteer Application Form and has been screened and accepted as a volunteer by an authorized individual is eligible to volunteer. Volunteer opportunities are open to all persons who have been accepted regardless of race, religion, gender or national origin.

### Volunteer Registration Process

- All volunteers must complete the appropriate Volunteer Application Form, present a photo ID (if available for minors) and meet eligibility requirements in order to be accepted as a SOVA volunteer.
- Providing false information on a Volunteer Application Form may automatically disqualify an individual from serving as a SOVA volunteer.
- Approved volunteers must notify SOVA staff within thirty days if they are charged with or convicted of a criminal offense. If SOVA becomes aware that a current or potential volunteer was charged with a criminal offense, SOVA reserves the right to suspend the volunteer pending the outcome of the criminal charge.
- Special Olympics athletes are welcomed and encouraged to volunteer in various roles within the organization. Athlete volunteers must meet the same eligibility and age requirements as other volunteers.

Volunteers are divided into two classes based on their contact with athletes in the program.

**Class A** – Volunteers who have regular, close physical contact with athletes; volunteers in positions of authority or supervision; volunteers in a position of trust with athletes; and volunteers that handle substantial amounts of cash or other assets. Class A Volunteers include: