

Special Olympics U.S.A.
Athlete/Unified Partner Nomination Criteria
Special Olympics World Games

World Games is a highly unique event that presents stresses and challenges unlike ANY other Special Olympics local, state, or even national competition. Each state must be sure the athlete(s) they submit will be able to physically, mentally, emotionally and SAFELY handle the undertaking; including lengthy and often uncomfortable travel conditions via plane, bus, boat, car, train etc., the ability to safely handle strange surroundings and unfamiliar/foreign food, the ability to be completely unsupervised, the ability to share living space with other athletes, the ability to take instruction and direction from unfamiliar team coaches, the ability to safely handle excessively LONG waits of several hours in the heat or cold, 5-10 miles of walking daily, adapting to sudden schedule changes, safely and thoroughly handling all of their own toileting/showering/bathing/hygiene needs, the ability to self-medicate, being away from home/family, the ability to interact with others in a positive and friendly manner, safely handle large crowds/loud noises/bright lights etc. While it is an honor and a privilege to be selected to Special Olympics USA and to compete at World Games, it is imperative that all athletes have a safe and positive experience. The Nomination process is extremely important in ensuring the athlete has a positive experience. **The onus falls on each local program and the state to carefully screen and submit athletes that will be capable of having a successful World Games experience in their chosen sport and outside of the sports venue.**

Athlete/Unified Partner Nomination Criteria

Please review the criteria for each Athlete/Unified Partner you are nominating from your Program. Adhering to the criteria is very important. Please keep in mind the requirements of the schedule and competition is not for all athletes involved in Special Olympics. It is imperative you adhere to the Nomination Criteria.

In order for an Athlete/Unified Partner to be eligible for nomination to Special Olympics U.S.A., they must qualify under the guidelines of the *Criteria for Advancement to Higher Level Competition* in the Special Olympics Sports Rules, Article I. and demonstrate good sportsmanship and the ability to function well as a part of a team. Athlete/Unified Partners must not only be dedicated to their sport, but must also have the ability to commit extra time to training, travel to a training camp and outside competition and be involved in other World Games activities as determined by their respective U.S. Program, SO USA or the World Games GOC. In addition, each Athlete/Unified Partner must meet all the individual criteria for their Nomination to the SO U.S.A. Delegation.

Athlete/Unified Partner Eligibility

The Athlete/Unified Partner must be from an accredited U.S. Special Olympics Program and must be at least 15 years of age or older (prior to the Games Opening Ceremonies). The Athlete/Unified Partner must have participated in an accredited Programs' Sports Training Program for at least 2 years prior to nomination in the specific sport they are applying for selection and have participated in an approved competition in the sport in which they are being nominated;

OR, if the U.S. Program does not offer the sport in which the Athlete/Unified Partner is being nominated, the athlete/Unified Partner must meet the Advancement Procedures utilizing their results from an event approved by the Special Olympics Virginia staff. Further, the Athlete/Unified Partner must be registered and in good standing with their home state Special Olympics Program and active with the Program.

NOMINATION CRITERIA:

- Athlete/Unified Partners must be enrolled and compete in their respective sport for a minimum of 2 years prior to the **year** preceding their nomination to the World Games
- Each Athlete/Unified Partner nominated must attend all training sessions as outlined by his/her U.S. Program. This may include weekend training camps that will require Athlete/Unified Partners to be away from home, school or work. Transportation will need to be worked out in advance
- Athlete/Unified Partners must be able to attend a minimum of one (1) Team Trial, date and location, TBD
- Athlete/Unified Partners must have a local coach identified to work in coordination with the SO U.S.A. sport specific Coach to train the Athlete/Unified Partner
- Family/legal guardians or Local Program contacts must be present at all required meetings and orientations as outlined by his/her U.S. Program
- Athlete/Unified Partners must be able to answer all questions in the affirmative on the Athlete/Unified Partner Information form (form will be distributed when available)
- Each Athlete/Unified Partner is subject to pre-delegation screening (Athlete/Unified Partner Nomination Criteria, Athlete/Unified Partner Information Form and SO U.S.A. Training Camp), to be conducted by the Management Team, **prior** to their Nomination to the Delegation
- Athlete/Unified Partners must be able to obtain a physician's signature on a World Games medical;
- Any chronic medical conditions must be well controlled
- Athletes must, at their own expense, be able to obtain a United States Passport and Visa if necessary. The SOVA staff will assist in this process as needed.
- Athlete/Unified Partners must be able to handle independently and/or under SO U.S.A. supervision a 15+ hour travel day
- Athlete/Unified Partner must be able to handle the normal daily schedule of 6:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.
- Athlete/Unified Partners must adhere to the Special Olympics U.S.A. Code of Conduct
- Athlete/Unified Partners must be able to be assigned to a SO U.S.A. Coach (1 coach per 4 Athlete/Unified Partners) for the duration of their travel to/from the Games, during the Games, including in the housing site and competition venues and during the Delegation training camp prior to the Games (due to a ratio of 1 coach per 4 athletes placed on the Delegation by the Games Organizing Committee, SO USA is **not** able to assign 1 coach to 1 athlete)
- Athlete/Unified Partners must be able to be away from their families and jobs for approximately a two (2) week period to attend the Games and Host Town (actual dates TBD)
- Athlete/Unified Partners must be able to **independently or with limited assistance** manage the activities and skills of daily living, ie. toileting, showering, personal hygiene, etc.
- Athlete/Unified Partners must be able to take care of themselves during the course of the World Games with minimal contact from family members
- Athlete/Unified Partners selected to SO U.S.A. must commit to a SO U.S.A. Training Program in advance of the World Games
- Athlete/Unified Partner, once selected to the Delegation, may be removed from the Delegation, at any time, for failure to adhere to the principles or fulfill the responsibilities of the criteria as set forth by the Special Olympics U.S.A. Management Team, Special Olympics North America and/or their state Program. An Athlete/Unified Partner may also be removed from the Delegation for health and safety issues
- All Athlete/Unified Partners selected to SO U.S.A. will be under the direction of a Delegation medical staff person who will supervise and may assist the Athlete/Unified Partners in taking their medication(s), including self-medicating Athlete/Unified Partners

NOTE: Non-Delegation members,(ie. family members, Special Olympics staff, other Athlete/Unified Partners, will not be permitted to travel with the Special Olympics U.S.A. Delegation, including to/from Team Trials or World Games..

The FINAL Special Olympics U.S.A. Delegation is not selected until AFTER the SO USA Team Trials are held and the team is officially announced by the U.S.A. Head of Delegation.