



Policy: Athlete Housing

Date: February 2014

INTRODUCTION:

Special Olympics Montana is an athlete-centered movement that welcomes athletes with intellectual disabilities of all abilities to participate in sports training and competition. Special Olympics is open to persons with intellectual disabilities age eight and older and offers a Young Athletes program for individuals with intellectual disabilities under the age of eight.

The health and safety of all Special Olympics participants is of paramount importance. Participants should feel that every Special Olympics event is a safe and positive experience and should not be fearful of other athletes, coaches or volunteers.

Arranging housing for overnight events involves the consideration of a variety of factors, including the varying abilities, ages and behaviors of athletes, the availability of housing and the costs associated with overnight accommodations.

POLICY

1.) **Gender** – Athletes and volunteers may not share a room with an athlete or volunteer of the opposite sex.

Exceptions:

- a. Married athletes who are both attending the event as members of a registered delegation. This exception does not apply to the spouse of an athlete who is not participating in the event, but attending solely as a spectator.
- b. Married volunteers who are both attending the event as members of a registered delegation. This exception does not apply if one of the volunteers is required to share a room with an athlete (other than the married couple's child), if this scenario will create a situation whereby an athlete is housed with a volunteer of the opposite sex.
- c. Family members and/or legal guardians of the opposite sex who serve as one-to-one chaperones for the related athlete.
- d. Housing in a facility that has multiple private rooms in addition to living space (such as a condominium or dormitory). Both males and females may be assigned to one condominium, if necessary, but private rooms may not be shared by individuals of the opposite sex. Chaperones must also be housed in the condominium and the chaperone/athlete ratio (as outlined in the supervision section of the policy) must be maintained.



e. Use of barracks or other facility (such as a gym) where a large number of individuals are assigned to one room. Athletes and volunteers must be separated as much as possible by gender (for example, females on one side of the gym and males on the other side).

2.) **Supervision** - The chaperone/athlete ratio of at least one properly registered chaperone to every four athletes must be maintained during overnight events. Proper supervision can be maintained without having a chaperone present in the room at all times. All chaperones must be screened in accordance with SOMT Volunteer Screening Policy.

3.) **Young Athletes** – Young Athletes events that involve overnight activities require increased supervision and therefore, Young Athletes participants must be accompanied by a properly registered and screened parent, guardian or an individual designated by a parent or guardian at all overnight activities. Rooming assignments for Young Athletes should be separate from the remainder of the delegation, whenever possible (for example, separate hotel rooms).

4.) **Acknowledgment** – Special Olympics Montana requires a parent's/guardian's signature that acknowledges: the possibility for overnight activities; that additional information about rooming assignments should be directed to the Local Program Coordinator; and that further questions about the housing policy should be directed to Special Olympics Montana. Athletes who are legally responsible for themselves are permitted to provide acknowledgment on their own behalf.

This requirement provides confirmation that the parents/guardians are aware that the Program has a policy relative to housing arrangements, empowers the parents/guardians to learn more about the housing practices, and also provides them an opportunity to notify SOMT if there are any concerns with the housing arrangements or information about which SOMT should be aware. Notification may be provided and signature secured via the athlete registration form or any other method that SOMT deems appropriate.

- New athletes (athletes registering for the first time on or after January 1, 2014 must acknowledge (as outlined above) the possibility of overnight stays at the time of their initial registration with the U.S. Program.

- Existing athletes (athletes registered prior to January 1, 2014 must acknowledge (as outlined above) the possibility of overnight stays no later than three years or the due date of each athlete's next athlete medical (whichever comes first) regardless of whether or not such notification is provided via the athlete medical.

5.) **Policy Implementation** – Local Program Coordinators are familiar with the policy and are responsible for implementing the policy at events.



BEST PRACTICES

1.) **Rooming Assignments** – If athletes will be sharing a room, following is a list of other items to consider when making room assignments:

- a. Consider matching athletes based on size, level of maturity, ability and age.
- b. Assign connecting rooms to those athletes who require additional assistance or supervision if the chaperone will not be in the same room.

2.) **Sleeping Arrangements** – Whenever possible, each member of the delegation should be assigned his/her own bed. If bed sharing is required, an athlete may not share a bed with a chaperone unless the chaperone is a parent or sibling of the athlete and has been screened in compliance with the Special Olympics U.S. Volunteer Screening Policy. The following techniques should be considered to help reduce the number of athletes required to share beds:

- a. Request cots from the facility to increase the number of beds available.
- b. Use air mattresses to increase the number of beds available (check with facility to ensure there is not a policy against the use of air mattresses). If bed sharing is required, Programs may consider having athletes pack sleeping bags and require athletes to sleep in his/her sleeping bag on top of the linens that are provided.

3.) **Supervision** - The following includes suggestions for providing athlete housing supervision:

a. **Hotels** – Whenever possible, reserve connecting rooms so that chaperones have direct access to the athletes' room(s). If connecting rooms are not available and the chaperone is in a room separate from the athletes for which he/she is responsible:

- i. Ensure that the chaperone has a key to the athletes' room(s)
- ii. Ensure that the athletes know how to reach the chaperone at all times
- iii. Consider using hall monitors

b. **Condo/Dorm (or other facility with multiple private rooms)** – Whenever possible, leave the doors to private rooms open so that chaperones can monitor each room.

c. **Barracks (or other facility with a large number of beds in one room)** – Whenever possible, chaperones should be assigned to a location in close proximity to the athletes he/she is supervising.

4.) **Family Members** – Prohibit family members from staying in athlete housing unless the family member is an official member of the registered delegation and is screened in compliance with SOMT Volunteer Screening Policy.



ATHLETE HOUSING POLICY/GUIDELINES CHECKLIST

Following is a checklist that can be used by individuals responsible for making the housing arrangements for overnight events. The checklist is a tool to help ensure compliance with SOMT written housing policy.

GENDER

Are individuals separated by gender? Yes No

- If no, one of the following must apply. Check the box or boxes representing the permissible exceptions that apply:

Married athletes each attending the event in an official capacity are sharing a room

Married volunteers each attending the event in an official capacity are sharing a room (note: this exception is not permissible if either volunteer is required to share a room with an athlete other than the married couple's child)

Athlete is sharing a room with a family member who is serving as a one-to-one chaperone for the related athlete (note: housing accommodations for these individuals must be separate from the standard athlete housing arrangements)

Facility has multiple private rooms (condominium or dormitory) and the procedures as outlined in the U.S. Program's housing policy are being followed

Housing involves barracks or other facility where a large number of individuals are assigned to one room (note: individuals should be separated by gender to the extent possible)

SUPERVISION

Housing plan ensures chaperone/athlete ratio of at least one properly registered chaperone to every four athletes is maintained? Yes No

- If no, housing plan must be revised accordingly

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Parents/guardians have acknowledged they are aware that Special Olympics activities may involve overnight housing accommodations and have been told how to obtain additional information? Yes No

- If no, SOMT must secure written confirmation from parents/guardians that they are aware of the potential for overnight events and how to obtain additional information.



SOMT Athlete Housing Policy

Approved by the Board of Directors on February 23, 2014, with language as amended and stated herein in Policy 1.)Gender; Exceptions: c section.

John Parkes, Chairperson

ATTEST

Kathy Rice, Secretary