Greetings Volunteer,

Thank you for volunteering to work with Special Olympics Montana. This Volunteer Handbook is designed to acquaint you with Special Olympics Montana, to communicate our guidelines, and to answer commonly-asked questions.

Thousands of volunteers like you, of all ages and from all walks of life, dedicate their time and energy to the Special Olympics movement. Volunteers are the backbone of Special Olympics Montana, and we could not exist without the time and dedication of over 4,000 volunteers statewide. The energy and enthusiasm of volunteers fuel our movement and make our athletes’ dreams a reality.

At Special Olympics Montana, there is a place for everyone. Our success is driven by the commitment of our Area Management Teams, Local Program Coordinators, Coaches, Unified Partners and thousands of Day of Event Volunteers. Being a volunteer is all about finding your motivations and the opportunity that’s right for you. That opportunity starts here!

Thank you for your interest in providing more opportunities to individuals with intellectual disabilities in Montana. We look forward to taking this journey with you.

Bob Norbie
Special Olympics Montana
President/CEO
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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 a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community. “Training for life through Sports.”

Our vision is to open hearts and minds towards people with intellectual disabilities using sport to create inclusive communities and create sustainable quality growth that serves 3,000 Montana athletes annually by yearend 2020.
For over four decades, Montanans with intellectual disabilities have enhanced their lives and health, and have extended friendships and family relations through Special Olympics. Like the Olympians of ancient Greece, these modern athletes compete in events designed to promote physical fitness, sportsmanship and the spirit of competition.

In 1968, Eunice Kennedy Shriver founded what would become the largest international program for adults and children with intellectual disabilities. Her summer camp for more than 100 children and adults started a movement that would dramatically change the way the world views people with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics provides quality sports training and competition opportunities for its athletes. In Montana, more than 2300 athletes and more than 350 Unified Sports® partners and over 100 Young Athletes participate in eighteen sports. Under the direction of volunteer coaches in home communities, training occurs throughout the year. Competitions include several area or regional games and four annual statewide events.

**Special Olympics Montana History**

Special Olympics Montana launched in 1970, with the first Summer Games being held at Dayliss Stadium in Billings, MT. Approximately 400 athletes competed in Aquatics and Athletics. In 1975 the first Basketball Tournament was held in Great Falls, MT at CMR Fieldhouse. Approximately 250 athletes competed. State Winter Games were added in 1977, and are hosted in Whitefish annually.
Volunteering with SOMT has many benefits. Specific programs within the organization may have the opportunity to provide additional benefits based on the services volunteers provide. Your program’s Outreach Director will provide and explain information on those benefits during your volunteer orientation.

**Benefits offered to all volunteers may include:**

- Training opportunities
- Distinguished Service Awards
- Monthly Coaches E-Newsletter
- The Champion quarterly newsletter
- Joining a dynamic team of Special Olympics volunteers
- Making a difference in your community by helping people understand the role Special Olympics plays in the lives of athletes
- Experiencing professional growth by educating yourself and others in the community about Special Olympics Montana.
- Meeting new people and having fun while serving your community.
- Participating on a team that is working to advance the mission of Special Olympics Montana.
- Working closely with athletes to help them develop leadership skills.
Currently, over 2,300 athletes from 65 Montana communities train and compete year-round.

There are upwards of 30,000 Montanans with intellectual disabilities, but conservatively we believe one-third or 10,000 of these individuals would be eligible for participation in Special Olympics. We are determined to service 3,000 Montana athletes annually by year-end 2020.

Special Olympics Montana offers an inclusive sport and play program for children under 8 years of age, referred to as Young Athletes. This program is for children with and without intellectual disabilities.

Registered athletes range from 8 to 86 years old with an equal ratio of adults and children. Registered athletes begin competition at age 8, and can continue throughout their lifetime, with no maximum age for participation.

Competitions, trainings, and health exams are offered to athletes at no charge.

Special Olympics Montana is largely funded by donations from individuals and businesses across the state.

Over 4,000 Montanans annually support the SOMT mission by giving their time and talent as volunteers.
Special Olympics Montana (SOMT) is the accrediting body for more than 121 programs, from 65 Montana communities, that participate in local, area, regional and state competitions. Montana is divided into 12 geographic areas, under an area management system, which is in place to improve the quality of programming at the local level. Individuals who participate as area directors and coordinators, that comprise the area management teams, are volunteers. These volunteers raise funds, oversee other volunteers, and help recruit athletes, all while providing important training and competition opportunities for local athletes.

Special Olympics, Inc. (SOI)

- The world governing body of Special Olympics
- Based in Washington, DC
- Responsible for accrediting programs worldwide

Special Olympics North America (SONA)

- Oversees the management of all USA Games and the coaching education system
- Provides support and collaboration in the development of materials, conferences, and regional instructor training seminars

Special Olympics Montana (SOMT)

- Oversees the management of all Montana programs
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Words matter. Words can open doors to understanding and respect that enable people with disabilities to lead fuller, more independent lives. Words can also create barriers or stereotypes that are not only demeaning to people with disabilities, but also rob them of their individuality.

The following language guidelines have been developed for use by anyone writing or speaking about people with intellectual disabilities to ensure that all people are portrayed with individuality and dignity.

**Appropriate Terminology**
- Refer to participants in Special Olympics as “Special Olympics athletes” rather than “Special Olympians” or “Special Olympic athletes.”
- Refer to individuals, persons or people with intellectual disabilities, rather than “intellectually disabled people” or “the intellectually disabled.”
- A person has intellectual disabilities, rather than is “suffering from,” is “afflicted with” or is “a victim of” intellectual disabilities.
- Distinguish between adults and children with intellectual disabilities. Use adults or children, or older or younger athletes.
- A person “uses” a wheelchair, rather than is “confined” or “restricted to” a wheelchair.
- “Down syndrome” has replaced “Down’s Syndrome” and “mongoloid.”
- Refer to participants in Special Olympics as athletes. In no case should the word athletes appear in quotation marks.
- When writing, refer to persons with a disability in the same style as persons without a disability: full name on first reference and last name on subsequent references. Do not refer to an individual with intellectual disabilities as “Bill” rather than the journalistically correct “Bill Smith” or “Smith.”
- A person has a physical disability rather than is “crippled.”
- Use the words "Special Olympics" when referring to the worldwide Special Olympics movement.

**Terminology to Avoid**
- Do not use the word "the" in front of Special Olympics unless describing a specific Special Olympics event. Correct example: “We are proud to support Special Olympics USA.” Correct example: “We are proud to be a part of the Special Olympics USA training camp.”
- Do not place an “of” between “Special Olympics” and the Program affiliation. Correct example: “We are proud to support Special Olympics Montana.” Incorrect example: “We are proud to support the Special Olympics of Montana.”
- Do not use the label "kids" when referring to Special Olympics athletes. Adult athletes are an integral part of the movement.
- Do not use the adjective "unfortunate" when talking about persons with an intellectual disability. Disabling conditions do not have to be life-defining in a negative way.
- Do not sensationalize the accomplishments of persons with disabilities. While these accomplishments should be recognized and applauded, people in the disability rights movement have tried to make the public aware of the negative impact of referring to the achievements of people with physical or intellectual disabilities with excessive hyperbole.
- Use the word "special" with extreme care when talking about persons with intellectual disabilities. The term, if used excessively in references to Special Olympics athletes and activities, can become a cliché.
 OUR SPORTS

Alpine Skiing

Athletics (Track & Field)

Bocce

Cross Country Skiing

Equestrian

Golf

Kayaking

Snowboarding

Soccer

*SOMT offers 18 sports*

Sports offered at the local level will vary from area to area

Aquatics

Basketball

Bowling

Cycling

Floor Hockey

Gymnastics

Powerlifting

Snowshoeing

Triathlon

indicates unified sport
COMPETITION & EVENTS

Competition

• Local Area Competitions (sports offered vary by location)
  - Winter Area Games: January – February
  - Spring Area Games: April – May
  - Fall Area Basketball: October

• State Level Competition
  - State Winter Games: Whitefish, MT – February
  - State Summer Games: rotates between Great Falls, Bozeman, Billings, & Missoula every three years – May
  - Regional Bowling Tournaments: multiple locations statewide
  - State Basketball: rotates between cities – November

• Additional Competitions held on a rotating schedule every four years.
  - USA Games
  - World Games
    World Winter Games
    World Summer Games

• Coaches Trainings: Statewide – Year-Round

Fundraisers & Special Events

• LETR Kick Off Conference: rotates between cities
• LETR Tip-A-Cop: Statewide
• LETR World’s Largest Truck Convoy: Billings, MT
• LETR Polar Plunges: Statewide
• MTN Chevy Raffle Ticket Sales: Statewide
**Unified Strategy**

Special Olympics Unified Strategy (formerly Project UNIFY) is a school-based program that uses sports and leadership programs to activate young people to develop school communities where all youth are agents of change – fostering respect, dignity and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities. Schools participate in 3 components of Unified Strategy: Unified Sports, Youth Leadership & Advocacy, and Whole School Engagement.

**Athlete Leadership Program**

The Special Olympics Athlete Leadership Program allows athletes to explore Special Olympics participation in roles off the field of play. Such participation might come in the form of an athlete serving on the Board of Directors, an Area Management Team, or as a spokesperson, team captain, coach, official, or media specialist.

**Healthy Athletes**

Healthy Athletes is a Special Olympics program that provides free health examinations in a fun, welcoming environment that removes the anxiety and trepidation people with intellectual disabilities often experience when faced with a visit to a medical professional. Information received from these exams help SOMT gain a better understanding of the health conditions of our Montana athletes. The following health exams are offered: Fit Feet, FUN Fitness, Healthy Promotion, Healthy Hearing, and Special Smiles.

**Law Enforcement Torch Run**

The Law Enforcement Torch Run® (LETR) is Special Olympics’ largest grass-roots fundraiser and public awareness vehicle in the world, raising over $46 million annually. At its most basic level, officers and athletes – the Guardians of the Flame – run the Special Olympics “Flame of Hope” to the Opening Ceremonies of Special Olympics competitions. Law Enforcement Officers raise funds through a number of special events: Polar Plunges, Tip A Cop events, Truck Convoy, Pedal for the Medal, and the actual Torch Run.
Each volunteer is assigned to a specific area and Outreach Director. This person will provide you with program-specific information and training. Your Outreach Director has the ultimate responsibility for your well-being as a non-paid volunteer of our organization and we encourage you to share any questions, suggestions, or concerns that you may have.

A volunteer’s attitude toward service will be professional with a high level of personal integrity maintained. Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner at all times. Athletes and Unified Partners, served by the volunteer may not be subjected to bodily or verbal abuse, neglect or any form of mistreatment.

Volunteers will not engage in activities, either with the organization or with an athlete of the organization, which may be or may have the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Examples of such activities include but are not limited to the following:
• Volunteers may not accept payment of any kind for services rendered during scheduled volunteer hours.
• Volunteers may not use privileged or personal information obtained through volunteer activities for personal gain.

Volunteers will not discriminate against or refuse service to anyone on the basis of age, race, color, religion, creed, political ideas, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability or national origin or any other protected class. Volunteers will respect the rights and opinions of SOMT athletes, and treat them with fairness, courtesy and good faith. Volunteers will not express personal beliefs, bias or prejudice in the performance of service. Discrimination will be cause for a written warning placed in the volunteer’s database record. Any form of discrimination is subject to immediate dismissal.
Volunteers are selected on the basis of merit and qualifications without regard to age, race, color, religion, creed, political ideas, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, national origin or any other protected class. Special Olympics Montana accepts the services of all volunteers with the understanding that approval is at the discretion of the organization. SOMT cannot guarantee volunteer placement. SOMT makes every effort to match volunteer applicants to volunteer opportunities according to the needs of the organization and the interests and availability of the volunteer. In determining matches, it is paramount that SOMT takes into account the need to maintain the health and safety of athletes, as well as fellow volunteers. SOMT reserves the right to reject volunteer applicants who refuse to sign a release of information for appropriate background checks, if required by the program for which they are applying.

- While conviction of a felony may not disqualify an individual from volunteering, SOMT reserves the right to dismiss or disqualify a volunteer based on the person’s criminal history.

Unreported absences may impact the people you are volunteering to serve. Please show consideration by making every attempt to inform your supervisor in advance of your absence. If you are unable to report for your assignment, or if you plan to be absent for an extended period of time, please contact your supervisor.

A series of three unreported absences may result in dismissal as a volunteer, unless you present good cause for reconsideration.

Many volunteer projects take place during specific timeframes. Some are structured to include a short training period at the start of the project. Tardiness impedes a volunteer leader’s ability to adhere to a timeline that they have set to complete a project. Please make every attempt to notify your team leader if you are unable to report at the time specified.
If you wish to resign from your position as a volunteer with SOMT, you may do so at any time by notifying your Area Director or Outreach Director. We request that volunteers provide at least 2 weeks’ notice. Upon notification, you will be asked to schedule a short appointment for an exit interview with your Area Director or Outreach Director. The exit interview provides us with valuable feedback on programs from a volunteer’s perspective.

The decision to dismiss a volunteer is taken very seriously at Special Olympics Montana. This decision is given very careful forethought on the part of the Outreach Director and VP of Field Service. A written letter, documenting the reason for termination, will be given to the volunteer. Volunteers have the right to appeal dismissal through the appropriate grievance policy procedure, following the SOMT chain of command.

**Reasons for Dismissal**

The following actions will result in dismissal of a volunteer’s services:

- Violation of confidentiality guidelines
- Discrimination
- Documented physical and/or verbal abuse of an athlete, unified partner, volunteer or staff
- Repeated absences without notification to supervisor
- Inappropriate conduct
- Theft
- Unwillingness or failure to cooperate with staff
- Unwillingness to serve as scheduled
- Inability to carry out assigned duties
- Inability to understand and follow direction
- Unwillingness or failure to attend mandatory training sessions
- Consuming alcoholic beverages or tobacco products while providing direct service to athletes
- Being under the influence of alcohol, illegal or prescription drugs that impairs abilities
**Grievance Procedures**

Any volunteer who feels that he or she has been treated unfairly by a supervisor may request an interview with the appropriate Outreach Director who is required to deal fairly and impartially with the situation. If a volunteer feels that he or she has been treated unfairly by the Outreach Director, he or she may register a formal complaint with the VP of Field Service.

- Any volunteer who has been terminated from a program may appeal this decision through the VP of Field Service. The VP of Field Service will fairly and impartially review any dismissal of volunteers with the COO & CEO.

**Driving Policy**

Driving has the potential to be among the most hazardous of tasks performed by volunteers. SOMT expects volunteers to follow safe driving practices to ensure their personal safety, public safety and the safety of the athletes they serve.

All volunteers transporting athletes on behalf of the organization must have a valid driver’s license, vehicle registration, and current proof of insurance.

Some driving violations are automatic disqualifiers for driving on behalf of Special Olympics Montana:

- DWI, DUI, or comparable offenses within seven years of application.
- Three or more moving violations within the past three years of application.
This summary is for illustrative purposes only. For a complete description of coverage, contact the state office.

**Commercial General Liability**

The Special Olympics Corporate Insurance Program (SOCIP) provides general liability coverage intended to protect insured Special Olympics organizations, athletes, and registered volunteers from third-party claims of bodily injury, property damage, and personal and advertising injury due to alleged negligence arising from the conduct by Special Olympics during a Special Olympics activity.

Specific fundraising activities are EXCLUDED from the SOCIP GL policy and may only be deemed eligible for coverage if certain underwriting requirements are met and the activity is approved by the Insurer prior to the event. Prior approval of all fundraising events is required.

**Non-Owned & Hired Auto Liability**

The Special Olympics Corporate Insurance Program provides limited protection to Special Olympics for liability claims arising as a direct result of the use of a non-owned or hired automobile. Coverage restrictions include non-owned and hired auto liability coverage applies excess of any other valid and collectible insurance, the vehicle must be used for Special Olympics business with the permission of Special Olympics and the vehicle must be driven by an employee or a registered volunteer of Special Olympics. Additional restrictions apply. Please contact the State Office for specific coverage information.

**NOTE:** Excess coverage is provided to Registered Class A Volunteers of Special Olympics who are using their personal vehicles on behalf of and with the permission of Special Olympics, and have a valid driver’s license and insurance with at least the state minimum requirements.

**NOTE:** No coverage is provided for losses caused by an uninsured/underinsured motorist to non-owned vehicles. However, uninsured/underinsured motorists’ coverage is afforded for vehicles that are “commercially rented” by an insured. The uninsured/underinsured motorist limit is $55,000 (combined single limit) or increased to meet the statutory limits required by a particular state.

**Participant Accident Info**

This policy responds when injuries resulting from an accident occur during a Covered Event or during Covered Travel. This is an accident medical policy, not a sickness or illness medical policy. For example,
It may cover the medical expenses caused by a broken leg, but not those caused by appendicitis. An accident must occur in order for coverage to apply.

The accident medical insurance policy is excess of any other valid and collectible insurance or medical plan applicable to the injured participant.

**Injuries** are defined as accidental bodily injuries received while insured under this coverage and resulting independently of sickness and all other causes. A covered loss, for purposes of this insurance, will include: a) the repair or replacement of existing prosthetic devices such as artificial limbs, glass eyes, and artificial dental work; and b) bodily injuries arising as a result of a seizure (including epileptic seizures). To be covered, the injury must occur while:

(a) participating in activities sponsored and supervised by Special Olympics; or

(b) traveling to, during, or after such activities as a member of a group in transportation furnished or arranged by Special Olympics.

**Covered Event** is defined as any scheduled activity authorized, organized, and supervised by Special Olympics. With respect to competition activities, this includes pre-competition activities and practice sessions.

**Covered Event** also includes activities authorized by Special Olympics that are Directly Supervised by Registered Class A Volunteers, but only when participation is part of the Special Olympics athlete’s overall sports training for Special Olympics, or for the purposes of qualifying for Special Olympics competition.

**Directly Supervised** is defined as supervised in person by a Registered Class A Volunteer.

**Registered Class A Volunteer** is defined as an individual currently registered in accordance with the Special Olympics Official General Rules, or other Special Olympics policies in effect during the policy period.

Insured Persons are defined as U.S. Special Olympics athletes (including Young Athletes), unified partners, managers, coaches, officials, chaperones, supervisors, fundraising participants, and other volunteers, whose names are on file with Special Olympics, while participating in a Covered Event.

Participant Accident Coverage & Limits apply. For coverage limits and additional coverage exclusions, contact the State Office.
### Performance Reviews & Evaluation

A new volunteer may be asked to participate in, or request, a performance review which may be done formally or informally. The review will allow the volunteer to address any needs or issues they have encountered in their new position, as well as allow the supervisor to make adjustments to accommodate the program’s needs.

A volunteer will be given advance notice of the performance review so he/she may prepare. Performance reviews may also be done on a yearly basis. Volunteers are encouraged to communicate openly on a regular basis with their supervisor regarding any questions or concerns.

### Background Checks

Special Olympics Montana volunteer screening policy requires various degrees of background checks for Class A Volunteers. Background checks will be performed, upon submission of the volunteer application.

For volunteers or unified partners under the age of 18, background checks are NOT run. Instead, SOMT does reference checks.

### Expense Reimbursement

Some SOMT volunteer programs have funding sources that allow reimbursement opportunities for expenses volunteers may incur as a result of their duties. This may include reimbursement for travel. Travel reimbursement requests must be submitted on the appropriate form 30 days prior to travel, and be approved by the Area Management Team.

Reimbursement is allowable only for travel that is part of the volunteer’s duty (i.e. travel to State Level Competitions; driving to annual Fall Leadership Conference or other trainings, etc.) Please check with your Area Director or Finance Coordinator for reimbursement guidelines before travel.

### Drug & Alcohol Policy

Volunteers are prohibited from performing volunteer duties on behalf of the organization while impaired by the use of legal or illegal drugs. Consuming alcoholic beverages or tobacco products while providing direct service to athletes is prohibited. Any volunteer convicted of a violation of a criminal drug/ alcohol statute which occurred while performing volunteer duties on behalf of the organization will be subject to dismissal. Please reference dismissal guidelines as aforementioned.
Abuse & Neglect of Athletes

Special Olympics Montana is responsible for the immediate reporting of any allegations or observations of possible abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and/or exploitation of individuals they serve. While not mandatory reporters, SOMT encourages volunteers to follow the same guidelines and report any allegations or observations of possible abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and/or exploitation.

The Outreach Director will work with the Volunteer to offer assistance and ensure the appropriate steps are taken to report the allegations or observations to the proper authorities or programs.

Any volunteer alleged to have abused, neglected and/or exploited a person receiving services from SOMT may be reassigned or suspended during the course of an investigation. Failure to comply with abuse policy or reporting guidelines will result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal of the volunteer who committed the offense or had knowledge of an incident and failed to make such report.

Special Olympics Montana staff can offer assistance and ensure that the appropriate steps are taken to guard any individual you feel is in danger of abuse or neglect.
As a Special Olympics volunteer, you agree that while serving as a volunteer, you will:

**Fulfill the responsibility of your assignment:**
- Carry out all aspects of your assignment,
- Attend all required meetings,
- Notify the volunteer coordinator if you cannot complete an assignment.

**Set an example for the athletes:**
- Refrain from smoking, consuming alcohol or using profanity when acting as a volunteer,
- Be discreet in your personal relationships with athletes and avoid any behavior which may be misunderstood or misinterpreted.

**Demonstrate good sportsmanship:**
- Support the decisions of referees, judges and committees, and use proper dissent processes,
- Be respectful during ceremonies and help your athletes be the same,
- Praise the athletes for their effort and encourage them to be happy for the success of other athletes.

**Be continually vigilant and cognizant of the safety of the athlete:**
- Never leave an athlete unchaperoned,
- Report anything you observe, either in the physical environment or an individual’s behavior, which you feel may cause potential harm.

**Be loyal to your commitment and to Special Olympics:**
- Look for constructive ways to overcome obstacles.

**Take advantage of the opportunities Special Olympics offers you:**
- Be open to new ideas and new ways of doing things,
- Become an active participant by extending your involvement to other roles of leadership and training,
- Delight in the change that your involvement makes in the life of someone you know and in the lives of those you never meet.

Thank you for volunteering with Special Olympics Montana and providing more opportunities to individuals with intellectual disabilities!
Our office is closed in recognition of the following holidays. Please also note that beginning the final week in May, until the first week in September, Special Olympics Montana is closed on Fridays. The staff instead works four ten hour days, Monday through Thursday.

- New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day, December 31st and January 1st
- Memorial Day, last Monday in May
- Independence Day, July 4th
- Labor Day, 1st Monday in September
- Thanksgiving, 4th Thursday & Friday in November
- Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, December 24th and December 25th

Holidays that fall on a weekend are observed on either the next or previous weekday. Please check with the office for specific closure information.

**Contact Information**

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Phone: 406.216.5327 Fax: 406-454-9043
Website: www.somt.org

Special Olympics Montana