

FAQ: Special Olympics and BC Speed Skating



What is Special Olympics British Columbia (SOBC)?

SOBC is a sport organization dedicated to providing year-round sport programming to individuals with intellectual disabilities. The organization serves almost 4000 athletes in 55 communities around the province. Programs offered include sport-specific programs (11 summer sports and 7 winter sports, including short track speed skating) and youth programs aimed at general physical activity (physical literacy and participation). SOBC has 2600 volunteers, including NCCP (National Coaching Certification Program) coaches, and has aligned with Canada Sport for Life's LTAD model. SOBC is associated with Special Olympics Canada (SOC) and Special Olympics International.

What is the BC Speed Skating Association's (BCSSA) position on the involvement of SOBC athletes in the organization?

BCSSA promotes equality/equal opportunity for all athletes. Special Olympics skaters should be encouraged and allowed to register with any BCSSA club. Special Olympics skaters are encouraged to participate in appropriate BCSSA competitions. Similarly, SOC and Speed Skating Canada (SSC) have a working relationship.

Are there speed skating programs in BC for Special Olympics skaters external to BCSSA?

There is currently one Special Olympics speed skating club in BC that is not affiliated with BCSSA. This club (Special Olympics Coquitlam) is located in Port Coquitlam and hosts a Special Olympics speed skating meet each year. The meet is sanctioned through SOBC. Some skaters who train with Special Olympics Coquitlam are also registered with BCSSA clubs.

Does Special Olympics have their own speed skating rules?

Yes. These sport rules can be accessed in the "Resources" section on the SOBC website: <http://www.specialolympics.bc.ca/community-resources>. To summarize, Special Olympics skaters skate short track on the 111.12m track in the counter-clockwise direction. The distances are defined in the sport rules. SOBC skaters otherwise follow SSC rules. In Special Olympics competitions, skaters compete the first day ("divisioning") to create ability racing divisions for subsequent competition days. Age categories are not used in Special Olympics groupings.

Do I need specific qualifications to coach a Special Olympics athlete?

NCCP-certified coaches in speed skating can coach any athlete at a BCSSA club practice or sanctioned meet. SOBC strongly recommends that coaches who regularly coach Special Olympics athletes pursue the following educational opportunities (in addition to sport-specific NCCP qualifications):

1. NCCP Special Olympics Competition Sport Workshop: dates for upcoming workshops can be found on the SOBC Coach Certificate webpage (<http://www.specialolympics.bc.ca/resources/coaching/certification-sobc-coaches>)
2. Special Olympics Canada Volunteer Orientation: interactive, self-directed online learning (<http://coachingportal.jolera.com/co/VolunteerOrientation/Pages/default.aspx>)

I have Special Olympics skaters in my BCSSA club. What BCSSA meets should they attend?

Generally, Special Olympics Skaters (registered through BCSSA clubs) should attend meets in the Regional or Provincial Streams. Events in the High Performance Stream are not likely to be appropriate for Special Olympics athletes. At the meet co-ordinator's discretion, Special Olympics skaters may be integrated into ability groups OR may form a separate racing group. The skaters' coach will be consulted to ensure the skater has a meaningful competitive experience.

Can Special Olympics athletes who are not registered with BCSSA clubs participate in BCSSA meets?

At this time, skaters must be registered with a BCSSA club (or another SSC-affiliated club) to participate in BCSSA-sanctioned meets.

Where can I get more information?

Please refer to the following websites or contacts.

1. Special Olympics BC: <http://www.specialolympics.bc.ca/>
2. Special Olympics Canada: <http://www.specialolympics.ca/>
3. Special Olympics International: <http://www.specialolympics.org/>
4. Manager of Sport & Youth Development, SOBC: Nicole Ong (nong@specialolympicsbc.ca)