

Volunteer Handbook



***Special
Olympics***
Northwest Territories

Welcome,

Thank you for volunteering with Special Olympics NWT (SONWT). This volunteer handbook is designed to acquaint you with SONWT, communicate our guidelines and to answer commonly asked questions.

Thousands of people around the world dedicate their time and energy to the Special Olympics movement. Volunteers are the backbone of Special Olympics NWT and we are very grateful to have you on board with us this season! As a volunteer you are becoming a part of a worldwide organization that supports over 4.5 million athletes across 170 countries worldwide.

At Special Olympics NWT, there is a place for everyone. Our success is driven by the commitment of volunteers, partners and sponsors within the community.

So, what is volunteering about for us? It is about providing a unique opportunity that creates a memorable experience for both athletes and volunteers!

That opportunity starts right here!

Thank you for your commitment and interest in helping athletes with intellectual disabilities in the NWT have a “sport for life” opportunity! We look forward to taking this journey with you!

Yours in Sport,
Alexandra Letzing, Sport Program Coordinator

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Mission & Values

Mission:

Special Olympics NWT is dedicated to enriching the lives of NWT residents with an intellectual disability through sport.

Vision:

To provide all athletes with choices in their opportunity to train and compete and to be accessible to all athletes with an intellectual disability regardless of their ability. We look to be a change agent for social inclusion and be recognized as integral part of the sport delivery system in the NWT.

Special Olympics NWT History:

Special Olympics NWT started in Yellowknife in 1989 with four athletes in bowling. SONWT is the territorial chapter for the national organization that provides sport for people with intellectual disabilities. It is a not-for-profit organization, registered as a charity within the SONWT. SONWT programs are run entirely by volunteers with the assistance of staff and is governed by a Board of Directors. Funding is provided through our fundraising partner Law Enforcement Torch Run, public donations, grants, corporate sponsors and special fundraising events.

Today, athletes participate in swimming, bowling, speed skating, rhythmic gymnastics and fitness in addition to seasonal mini-programs (4-6 weeks in duration) in track and field, golf and snowshoeing. We also provide Active Start and FUNdamentals, a youth physical literacy skills development programs ages 2-11. We have over 40 athletes registered along with approximately 40 volunteers taking part each season.

Contact Information

Special Olympics NWT Executive Director

Sandra Turner

Email: executivedirector@sonwt.ca

Phone: (867)445-7320 (best) or (867)446-2266

Special Olympics NWT Sport Program Coordinator*

Lexie Letzing

Email: sport@sonwt.ca

Phone: (867)445-8608

Contact in the event of any absence from sport program or sport-related issue

Benefits of Volunteering with SONWT

By joining our dynamic team of Special Olympics Volunteers and Athletes you will...

- 1) Work closely with athletes, allowing them to develop sport skills through their chosen sports.
- 2) Meet new people within your community.
- 3) Make a difference in your community by helping people understand the role Special Olympics plays in the life of athletes.
- 4) Learn more about volunteering and coaching athletes with intellectual disabilities through coach development activities.
- 5) To be part of a unique experience that is like no other in sport! Reap the rewards of providing sporting opportunities for athletes with intellectual disabilities.



Special Olympics NWT Structure & Roles

Head Coach:

The head coach is the sport technical lead for their respective sport. Head coaches are to be a figure that provides advice and direction to other coaches in their chosen sport. They are responsible for the development and monitoring of seasonal training plans for all athletes in their respective sport. Head coaches must be 18 and over.

Sport Manager:

Sport programs often have a Sport Manager that works alongside the head coach. Their role is to manage all aspects of their assigned sport, including but not limited to: administration, attending sports to ensure ratios are met and working closely with the head coach on the selections of athletes for potential competition. Any issues within sports are dealt with by the Sport Manager and/or the Sport Program Coordinator.

Event Volunteer:

Event volunteers are those that volunteer outside of the coaching environment or on a one-time basis. They take part in fundraising and other events such as the Plane Pull or the Polar Plunge. This type of volunteer would never be one-on-one with an athlete.

Non-Sport Volunteer:

Non-sport volunteers assist Special Olympics NWT in various roles to support the organization. We have some volunteers that use their time to take pictures at the sport programs, and others that raise money for the programs.

Board of Directors:

The Board of Directors provides direction and ensures we are best meeting the needs of NWT athletes. The board is supported by two staff members to work with our athletes, coaches and volunteers.

Volunteer Guidelines and Requirements

Guidelines:

- 1) Fulfill the responsibility assigned to you:
 - a. Carry out all aspects of your role
 - b. Coach weekly in your assigned sport, if you have to miss a practice/event, please inform Sport Program Coordinator Lexie Letzing at (867)445-8608 or sport@sonwt.ca as soon as possible. If they cannot be reached please contact head coach of your respective sport at their contact information they have provided you.
- 2) Set an example for the athletes:
 - a. Refrain from smoking, vaping, consuming alcohol or using profanity when acting as a volunteer
- 3) Demonstrate good teamwork:
 - a. Support your head coaches and other volunteers
 - b. Praise the athletes for their effort and encourage them to be happy for the success of other athletes.
- 4) Be continually vigilant and cognizant of the safety of the athletes:
 - a. If assigned to work with an athlete or groups of athletes, never leave them unattended
 - b. Report anything you observe, either in the physical environment or an individual's behaviour, which you may feel cause potential harm to the Sport Manager.
- 5) Be loyal to your commitment to Special Olympics:
 - a. Look for constructive ways to overcome obstacles
 - b. Be open to new ideas and new ways of doing things
 - c. Delight in the change that your involvement makes in the life of someone you know and in the lives of those you never meet

Requirements:

- 1) A volunteer application must be completed and submitted to the Sport Program Coordinator via email: sport@sonwt.ca
- 2) A valid Vulnerable Sector Check within the last 3 years is required at the time of completing the volunteer application. SONWT can provide a letter that you can submit to the RCMP at the time of your request.
- 3) Volunteers must complete the Special Olympics Canada Volunteer Orientation Course and the NCCP Safe Sport course. You can find the courses at the links below:

<https://solearn.ca/>

<https://safesport.coach.ca/>

Things to Know

Sport Program Pick-Up and Drop-Off Times:

Special Olympics NWT is responsible for the athletes from the time they step onto the practice area ten minutes ahead of the scheduled practice time until they leave the practice area at the time identified as the end of the practice time. The practice area is the pool deck, the bowling lanes, the gymnastics floor, the gym or the playing field. We are not responsible for their preparation in the change room or entry ways. Each sport is run by volunteers and we respect your time by not asking you to be responsible for athletes outside of the timeframe above. One volunteer will remain on site 10 minutes after the sport finishes, to allow for late pick ups.

Permission for Athletes to Leave the Session:

Special Olympics NWT expects a responsible individual to bring the athlete to practices, assist them to be ready to go on the practice area, and pick them up within the time frames noted above. If the parent/guardian is prepared to have the athlete leave at the end of practices alone, they will have a signed permission note. Sport managers and athletes head coaches will know who these athletes are. Other athletes cannot leave alone.

Athletes Who Need Assistance Beyond Our Coach/Athlete Ratio:

In order to participate in Special Olympics NWT sport programs, athletes must be able to take part within the standard coach/athlete ratio as set out in Special Olympics Canada sport technical requirements. The ratios are:

- 1 coach:4 athletes for summer sports (ex: golf, athletics, aquatics, rhythmic gymnastics)
- 1 coach:3 athletes for winter sports (ex: speed skating, figure skating snowshoeing) and the youth athlete programs
- 1 coach:5 athletes for 5-pin bowling

If Special Olympics NWT is unable to provide enough coaches/volunteers to supervise an athlete who cannot participate within the ratio, the athlete will be required to have a support person in attendance at all practices, competitions and events who is able to participate with them, as and when requested by the head coach or Sport Program Coordinator. This support person will not be considered as a coach or be included in the coach/athlete ratio. You will see some of these support people on the side in some sports.

Sport & Program Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Speed Skating 8-9 pm Multiplex	No Sport	Bowling 5:15-6:15 pm King Pin Bowling Alley	No Sport	No Sport	Youth Active Start: 9:30-10:15 am FUNdamentals: 10:25-11:10 am St. Joes Mini Gym	Swimming 3-4:00 pm Ruth Inch Memorial Pool
					Fitness Class 11:30 am-12:30 pm St. Joes Mini Gym	
					Gymnastics 3-4:00 pm St. Joes Mini Gym	

subject to change based on amenity availability

Benefits of The Sport

There are many levels of Special Olympics Programming; Active Start (ages 2-6), FUNdamentals (ages 7-11), sport participation recreational programs, entry level competitive programs and International/Worldwide competition.

Local programs and competitions occur frequently, and athletes take part in sporting activities mainly for recreation here in the NWT, with a small number that will compete at provincials and beyond.

Special Olympics Canada Games run on a 4-year cycle between Winter and Summer Games.

Winter Sports	Summer Sports
Local Competition	National Competition
Provincial Competition	World Competition
National Competition	Local Competition
World Competition	Provincial Competition

Divisioning – “Every Performance is Recognized!”

Athletes of all ability levels are encouraged to participate, and every athlete is recognized for his/her performance.

Special Olympics International uses divisioning at major competitions:

- The current level of ability the athletes competes at, regardless of their previous achievements and performances
- At competition, athletes are grouped on their current times/scores to ensure athletes are competing against others of the same ability and not their disability

Who Can Participate in Special Olympics

Individuals who have an intellectual disability can participate in Special Olympics. Individuals with other developmental disabilities may also have the opportunity to participate but will only be able to compete locally.

Flexibility is left to the Special Olympics NWT Sport Program Coordinator to determine the eligibility of the participant because of the variety of situations and needs. Inclusion is preferred to exclusion when eligibility is in question, and it is at the discretion of Special Olympics NWT to determine suitability for local Special Olympics participation. Athletes may be able to participate in program activities but may not necessarily be eligible to compete in the Special Olympics Canada four-year competitive cycle (provincial, national, world games).

A person is generally considered to have an intellectual disability if that person has, from childhood, significantly sub-average intellectual functioning which limits participation and performance in several aspects of daily life such as communication, self-care, home living, functioning at school or work, or personal independence.

Intellectual disability is defined by Special Olympics Canada* as follows:

Individuals must have both a current intellectual deficit and a deficit in adaptive functioning with onset during the developmental period. All three of the following criteria must be met:

- 1) Intellectual deficit, as measured by an Intelligence Quotient (IQ), below the population mean for a person's age and cultural group, which is typically an IQ score of approximately 70 or below;
- 2) Significant limitations in adaptive functioning in one or more aspects of daily life activities such as: communication, social participation, self-care, self-direction, functioning at school or work, independence at home or in community settings; and
- 3) Onset during the developmental period (before 18 years of age).

*Taken from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV 2000); published by the American Psychiatric Association and used by professionals in Canada for determining development diagnoses.

Athlete Age Requirements

There is no maximum age limitation for participation in Special Olympics. The minimum age requirement for participation in any Special Olympics NWT sport program is twelve years of age, and in any Special Olympics competition is thirteen years of age. The young athlete programs (Active Start and FUNdamentals) introduce children two to twelve years old to the world of sport.

Competition Attendance Requirement

To be considered for inclusion on a team for regional, provincial, national or world games, an athlete must have attended at least 80% of the sport's practice times during the previous two years. This rule is put in place to ensure athletes prove their commitment to the sport.

Special Olympics NWT – Language & Terminology Guidelines

These guidelines are used when speaking, writing, or referring to people with disabilities.

Appropriate Terminology

- A person has an intellectual disability rather than suffering from, afflicted with, or a victim of an intellectual disability
- Always use people-first language, placing the person before the disability (e.g. person with an intellectual disability, not “the intellectually disabled” or “the intellectually disabled person”)
- Distinguish between adults and children with an intellectual disability. Use adult or children, or older or younger athletes
- Down syndrome has replaced Down’s syndrome
- Refer to participants in Special Olympics as athletes. In no case should the word appear in quotation marks
- The word “Special Olympics” are never written without the “s” at the end of “Olympics”

Terminology to Avoid

- Refer to a person’s disability only when it is relevant or necessary
- Do not use the label “kids” when referring to the Special Olympics athletes
- Do not use the adjective “unfortunate” when talking about people with an intellectual disability
- Do not use the word “the” in front of Special Olympics unless describing a specific Olympics event or Games
- Never refer to an athlete as a “Special Olympian”; avoid the use of “Olympian” altogether