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**Fall 2023  
Sport and  
Competition Call**

# Today's Agenda

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- Welcome/Introductions
- Pre-Season Reminders
- 2023 Sectional & State Events
- Training
- Fall Sport Rule Updates
- Questions

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# PRE-SEASON REMINDERS

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## SEASONS AT A GLANCE



	SPRING	FALL	WINTER
<b>Coach Site Registration</b>	Nov. 1 - Dec. 1	April 1 - May 1	August 1 - Sept. 1
<b>Athlete, Unified Partner, Volunteer Signup</b>	Dec. 15 - Jan. 15	May 15 - June 15	Sept. 15 - Oct. 15
<b>Season Length</b>	March - June	August - November	December - March
<b>Sports Offered</b>	Athletics (Track & Field), Basketball, Equestrian, Golf, Gymnastics, Softball, Swimming, Tennis	Bocce, Bowling, Flag Football, Long Distance Running/Walking, Powerlifting, Soccer, Volleyball	Alpine Skiing, Bowling, Figure Skating, Floor Hockey, Snowboard, Snowshoe, Speed Skating

## Access Sign Ups on the

- **SOPA website:**

[https://specialolympicspa.org/  
get-involved/sports-sign-ups](https://specialolympicspa.org/get-involved/sports-sign-ups)

# Sports Season Prep

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## Important Fall Dates:

- **Fall Season Calendar:** [Central](#), [East](#), [West](#)
  - Since due dates are different for each Sectional, there is one calendar per section of the state.
- [REGISTRATION RESPONSIBILITIES](#): Explains who does what and when
- **Eligibility Deadline: August 25**
- **Season Dates:** August – November

# Air Quality

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If air quality levels are in an Unhealthy Zone (151) or above, no outdoor activities should occur (social or active); as indicated within the documents these activities should be rescheduled or moved indoors.



You can monitor Air Quality levels at <https://www.airnow.gov/> enter your location and the current status will be provided.



You can use this [Air Quality Guide](#) document as an overall reference.

# Athlete & Volunteer Eligibility

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## **Athlete Requirements: Medical on file WITH signature + expiration dates**

- **Local Programs:** Athlete Medical under Certifications
- **Regions:** Athlete Registration Form & Health History under Certifications
- Valid for 3 years.
- Save attachments under "Attachments" within a person's profile vs. anywhere else in the profile.

## **Class A Volunteer Requirements: Class A Trainings + Background Check on file**

- Background Results under Background Checks, Valid for 5 years.
- General Orientation under Training, Valid for life.
- Protective Behaviors, under Training, Valid for 3 years.
- Concussion Training, under Training, Valid for 3 years.

# UCS: PIAA Medical

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A Unified Champion School athlete or Unified Partner may participate in a local program with their PIAA Medical. The participant must request a copy of the medical from their school.

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The PIAA physical exam must be inputted into Vsys as an "athlete medical" and the medical form must be uploaded as an attachment.

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**UPDATE:** The PIAA physical exam form is good for one year from the Dr's Signature date. If the date is 3/22/22 the exam expires on 3/22/23.



# Attendance Tracker Updates

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Age Calculator – fall is determined as of **6/15/2023**

Eligibility Tab: Deadline for all rostered individual to be eligible is **8/25/2023**

- Athlete Medical
- Volunteer: Background Check, Gen Orientation, Protective Behavior, Concussion Training

Sport Specific Rosters/Tabs:

- Capture all athlete information in one place

Missing volunteer/athlete

- Did they complete Sport Sign-up Form?
  - If Yes and you don't see them contact RSD

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

**CONTACT YOUR REGIONAL SPORT DIRECTOR**

# Attendance Trackers

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## **Tab 3: Eligibility – If participant is NOT eligible...they cannot participate**

Athletes: Must have current medical

Volunteer: General Orientation, Concussion Protocol, Protective Behaviors, 18 and over current background check

Highlighted **RED** out of date

Highlighted **YELLOW** will expire prior to state competition

Updated weekly by SOPA from July 28-Aug 25

**IMPORTANT: Fall deadline August 25, 2023**

## **Tab 4: Competition – sport specific**

Tracker for athlete attendance, registration times for competitions

Allows you to track everything in once place – ability to copy and paste from here into event Google registration forms

## **Tab 5: Rating Form (Team Sports, Player Competency Rating Form)**

Explained on slides 49-52

# Attendance Trackers

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**Coach will receive tracker when they submit Site Registration Form**

**Site Attendance Tracker has 4-5 tabs: Directions, Attendance, Eligibility, Competition, Rating Form**

- **Tab 1: Directions: How to complete the form**
- **Tab 2 Attendance:**
  - Lists all participants that have signed up
  - Includes phone, email, DOB and age
  - Attendance should be tracked after each practice
  - Interest in attending Sectionals & State Games will be used to advance for competitions
  - Data will be used to collect training numbers and ultimately future allocations

# Athlete & Volunteer Eligibility

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- The ELIGIBILITY tab on each of your attendance trackers will be updated on a weekly basis from July 28th - Aug 25 by your Regional Sports Director. **PLEASE encourage and assist your athletes and volunteers in meeting our eligibility requirements.**
- **The deadline to make sure athletes and volunteers meet eligibility requirements for the Fall is August 25th**
- Athletes and Volunteer CANNOT participate in trainings if they have not met all eligibility requirements - it is YOUR responsibility to track this.
- In the roster, if you see **RED highlight**, that person is not in compliance with eligibility requirements to participate and should NOT be training.
- In the roster, if they are **yellow highlight**, they will expire during the season in advance of state games and will not be eligible unless they update the identified requirement.

# Unified Partners Eligibility

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- **NEW in 2023** – Unified Sports Partners do not need an athlete medicals.
- All Partners – Must have a VSys database record
- Ages 16 and up – must have General Orientation and Protective Behaviors Training
- Ages 18 and up - Must have General Orientation, Protective Behaviors and a Background check.

# Team Sport Age Groups

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**Team Sport Age Groups will be effective starting with the Fall 2023 season.**

SOPA sponsored Team Sports include:

- Fall Season: soccer, flag football, volleyball
- Winter Season: floor hockey;
- Spring Season: softball, basketball

[Team Sport Age Group Resource](#) outlines the guidelines.

- This document includes links to two supporting documents: [Why Age Groups are Important](#) and [Exemption Process](#).
- Please review all documents for a full understanding of the age groups and how to submit exemptions. This [video](#) will explain these documents and how to submit exemption in more detail.

If you have questions, please contact your Regional Sport Director or Michelle Boone ([mboone@specialolympicspa.org](mailto:mboone@specialolympicspa.org)).

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# Qualifiers

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## **FALL**

- **All Fall sport athletes MUST** attend their respective Sectional event to be considered for Fall Fest.
- Games Advancement slots per Sectional will be dependent on total number of slots at Summer Games and % of interest in advancing from each Sectional

- LDR-W
- Powerlifting
- Bocce
- Soccer: 5v5, 7v7, skills
- Volleyball: Team and skills
- Flag Football Team and skills

# Allocations

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- Fall Allocations can be found on the SOPA Website, State Games tab
  - [SOPA State Games Paperwork Webpage](#)
- As always, please remember that you can request additional allocations through the LOI process.
- Previous Lunch & Learn about the allocation process.
  - Allocation L&L



# Everybody Plays

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Everybody on the roster must play in each game and preliminary's

At events:

- Teams must complete line-up cards, with numbers and names.
- Bottom of the card – those who are not playing and why
- Scorekeepers will check the players as they enter the game
- Code of conduct will be filed on the coach if all players are not played

# Honest Effort Rule (HER)

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- Remember to :
  - Accurately time your athletes
  - Check the distance of the course your participants are using to ensure it is the correct distance
  - Use a competition like setting when gathering entry times

# Athlete Performance Training

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## Current Registered/Participating Teams

- DROP IN CHARLA OR REGIONAL APT SCORECARD

## How to sign-up

- Go to your VSys portal and complete the Athlete Performance Training under "Training Schools, Webinars and More"
- Watch the video, take the quiz and then complete the registration form

## Benefits of APT

- FREE to programs/teams
- Turn-key, easy to execute
- HQ will provide coaches and athletes with materials
- Provide health, fitness and wellness education to athletes and coaches

# Sport Management Teams

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Special Olympics Pennsylvania Sport Management Teams are made up of key regional leadership volunteers who represent each of SOPA's sponsored sports. Typically, these individuals represent a variety of levels within their respective sports, both inside and outside of Special Olympics.

## Goals:

- Promote sport within the Special Olympics community.
- Increase awareness of and athlete participation in the sport.
- Work to improve the quality of coach/athlete training and competition opportunities for the sport they represent.



# STATE COMPETITIONS

# Fall Sectionals

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## Western Fall Sectional:

- Slippery Rock University
- September 24

## Central Fall Sectional:

- Juniata College
- October 1

## Eastern Fall Sectional

- DeSales University
- October 1



# Fall Fest: Nov. 3 -5

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## Villanova University

### Important Dates:

- Reg Info: Will be out by 9/8
- LOI: Due 9/28
- Final Allocations: 9/29
- Rosters: Due 10/2
- Google links sent: 10/5
- Registration: Due 10/12
- Scratch/Activation: Due 10/26



# Invitational Events

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## Area M Fall Classic

- Sunday, September 17
- [Lparody@specialolympicspa.org](mailto:Lparody@specialolympicspa.org)

## Montgomery LRDW Invitational

- Saturday, October 14, Heebner Park
- [Scottotterbein@gmail.org](mailto:Scottotterbein@gmail.org)

## Philly Volleyball Tournament

- Saturday, October 21
- [Mcordell@specialolympicspa.org](mailto:Mcordell@specialolympicspa.org)

## Middle Road Tournament (Allegheny)

- Saturday, October 21
  - [Jmerckle@specialolympicspa.org](mailto:Jmerckle@specialolympicspa.org)
  - Soccer, LDRW, Bocce, Flag Football







# TRAINING SITES

# Be Prepared for the Season!

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- Get everyone eligible
- Understand and be aware of Air Quality levels
- Keep a pulse on illness/disease outbreaks within your community – remind athletes not to attend training if they are sick and to practice healthy habits and good hygiene.
- Know your facilities Emergency Action Plan and Evacuation route
- Updated yourself on sport rules and work with assistant coaches on a seasonal plan – identify who will manage each task during practice. Recruit additional assistance if needed.

# Athlete as Coach

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Do you have an athlete who would like to be a coach?

- SOPA will host seasonal training webinars to review the responsibilities and steps for any athletes who would like to be part of our Athletes as Coaches Program.
- The Fall training was held on July 11th.
- If you do have an athlete and you don't want to wait for the Winter Webinar – Here is the recording of the Fall Webinar -  
<https://www.facebook.com/specialolympicspa/videos/1327389408157502?idorvanity=128859894386473>
- Athlete as Coach Request form to be completed by athletes who wish to apply to be trained as a coach: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WZC14Ssl1IsilbBO\\_93WDmsaQq9-wmK3/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WZC14Ssl1IsilbBO_93WDmsaQq9-wmK3/view)

# Coaching Requirements

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As of January 2021, Coach requirements for training and competition:

- **Team Sports:**
  - Must have at least one (1) certified coach per team
- **Individual Sports and Team Individual Skills:**
  - Must have at least one (1) certified coach per 25 athletes



# Coaching Practicum Hours

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- If a coach needs to complete 10 required practicum hours from sport training courses, that were taken in 2019, 2020, 2021 they have until December 2023 to submit these hours.
- **Hours must be submitted on their VSys Portal.**

# Continuing Education Update

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- **Protective Behavior and Concussion Training** has been removed from the list of approved courses for Continuing Education and from the Continuing Education Request form.
- **Effective February 1, 2023, these two courses will not be accepted for continuing education**
- There are plenty of Continuing Education options available on the [SOPA website](#).



## Expired Sport Certifications

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- If your sport certification expired between 2020 and 2022 you have until December of 2023 to complete your continuing education course to update your certifications.
- As noted above - Protective Behaviors and Concussion training will not be accepted as of February 1, 2023.
- **This extension expires on December 31, 2023.**
- On January 1, 2024, you will need to retake the Sport that has not been updated.



# FALL SPORT UPDATES



# Brand and Uniform Guidelines

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- New Resource that include SO brand and uniform guidelines
- Includes mock-ups of sport specific uniforms

[SOPA Brand and Uniform Guidelines](#)

# SOPA Website - Sports Offered Page

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- Links to all the sport pages
- Sports Offered
- Lots of great resources!

Fall Sports	
Fall Season Rollout	>
Bocce	>
Flag Football	>
Long Distance Running/Walking	>
Powerlifting	>
Roller Skating	>
Soccer	>
Volleyball	>

# Bocce

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## Events Offered at Sectional and Fall Fest

- Traditional Doubles
- Unified Doubles

**NEW for 2023:** 2-minute warning will be announced, the current frame will be completed, and no additional frames will be played (unless ending in a tie)

## Game Times:

- Sectionals will have a 20-minute time limit
- Fall Fest
- Pool play – 20-minute time limit
- Medal Rounds – 30- minute time limit

Coaches will be notified when the play time is halfway through. 10 minutes for a 20-minute game and 15 minutes for a 30 – minute game.



# Bocce Attire

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Collared shirt

Pants or walking shorts

Athletic Shoes (sneakers)

You may wear a visor or ball cap preferably with your local program on it if needed for sun glare. No other hats are permitted.

No Denim pants (jeans)

No Athletic Shorts

# Flag Football

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## Events Offered

Traditional Team

Unified Team

Individual Skills

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## Roster size

Minimum 5 players

Maximum 10 players

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# Flag Football - New

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Teams shall play with a pebble-grained leather or rubber covered ball in regular or intermediate/youth football sizes.

During competition, a team is permitted to play with their own selected ball on offense.

Permitted ball sizes: **Size 7, 8, and 9**



# Flag Football Attire

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- All participants must have matching uniforms (shirts & shorts/pants)
- Shirts must have matching numbers on front and back that can be tucked in at the waist to avoid obstruction of flag pulling.
- All players must wear athletic shorts/pants without pockets.
- No blue jeans will be allowed.
- Players must wear rubber-cleated or flat-soled athletic shoes.
- Metal cleats, spikes, hiking boots, or other equipment deemed dangerous by officials will not be allowed.
- No jewelry (rings, bracelets, necklaces, earrings, etc.) or hats with hard bills may be worn.
- Sunglasses should be non-rigid and pliable. Players wearing eyewear are strongly encouraged to utilize an eyewear strap that helps hold the glasses in place.
- The referee shall not permit any team member to wear equipment or apparel which, in his/her judgment, is dangerous or confusing to other players or is not appropriate. Reasonable accommodations can be made for unique or extenuating circumstances. The accommodations should

# LDR/W

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## Events Offered at Sectional and Fall Fest

- 1500 meters (.94 miles) - Walk, Run & Unified Walk, Run
- 3000 meters (1.8 miles) - Walk, Run & Unified Walk, Run
- 5000 meters (3.1 miles) - Walk, Run & Unified Run
- 10,000 meters (6.2 miles) Run Only

## Event Participation

- Sectionals – 3 events
- States – 3 Events + the 10,000 meters.

Athletes and Unified Partners must elect to run or walk for their events.





# Powerlifting

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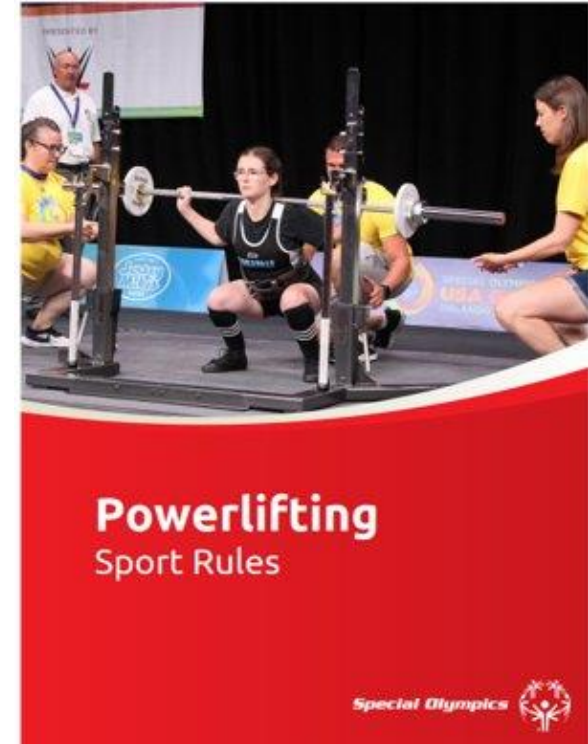


- **Three lifting events:**

- Squat
- Bench Press
- Deadlift

- **Combination events:**

- 2-lift combo (bench press & Deadlift)
- 3-lift combo (squat, bench press & Deadlift)
  - Note that combination events are totals of the results from the lifts; not separate lifting events.



# Powerlifting

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- Minimum age to compete is 14
- Ages 8 to 13
  - Teach proper form first – Then work on strength
  - Should only lift body weight
- Use the proper commands in your training
  - Bench – Bench, Press, Rack
  - Dead Lift - Down
  - Squat – Squat, Rack

# Soccer

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## Events Offered

5v5 and 7v7 Traditional Team

7v7 Unified Team

Individual Skills

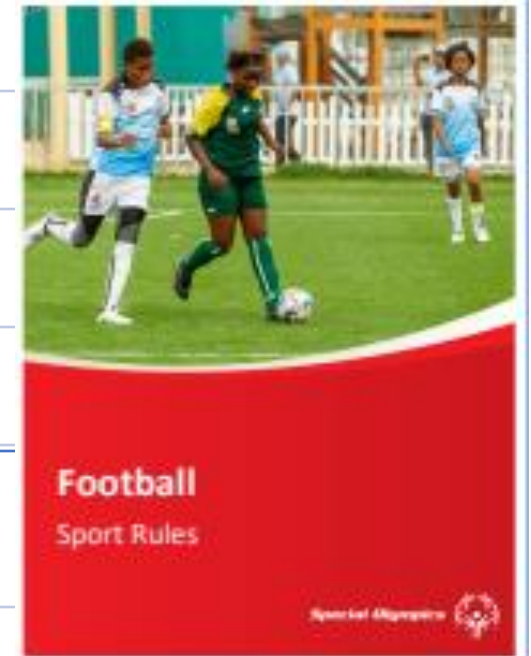
Advanced Skills

## Roster size

5v5: Minimum 5/Maximum 10 players




7v7: Minimum 7/Maximum 12 players

Unified 7v7: Min. 7/Max. 12; no more than a 2 person difference in athletes and unified partners



# Soccer Attire



Jersey		Must have identifiable player number on the back of the jersey. All team jerseys must be the same with exception of the goalkeeper jersey which must be distinguishable from all other players on the pitch.
Shorts		Shorts should be slightly above knee length to reduce the restriction of movement.
Socks/ Stockings		Socks/Stockings should reach the knee and cover the player's shinguards.

# Volleyball Events Offered

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## Events Offered

Traditional Team

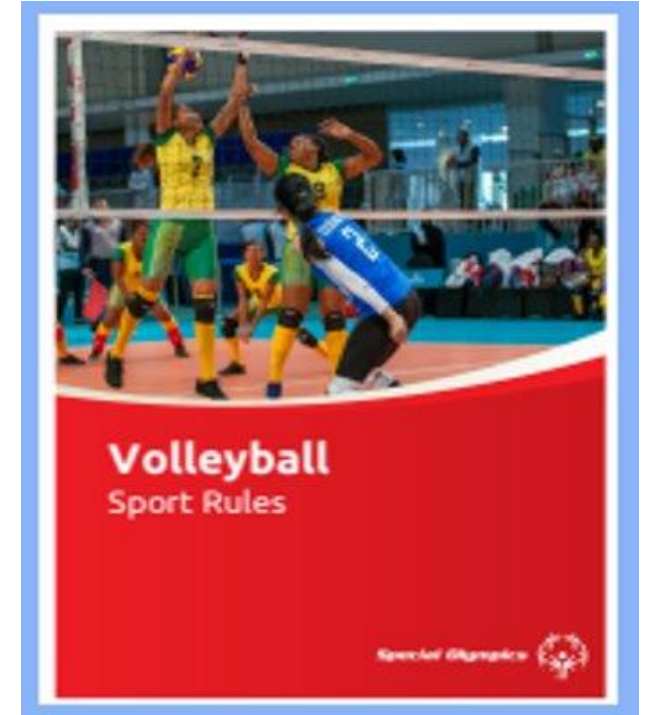
Unified Player Development Team

Individual Skills

## Roster size

Minimum 6 players

Maximum 10 players



# Volleyball Attire

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- Jersey
  - Numbered 1-99
  - Numbers on back and chest
- Shorts – must match jersey
- Socks – should match the uniform
- Sneakers
- Knee Pads - Recommended
- Arm sleeves – If worn, NO padding
  - Color – must match uniform or they can be either black or white.
- No Gloves may be worn.



# Player Development

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- The purpose is for athletes to acquire the skills, understanding and confidence to independently play a team sport.
- Unified partners act as mentor coaches on the court with verbal, visual and physical cues as well as encouragement during practices and competitions.
- Athletes improve their skills and knowledge through the on-court coaching/mentor support provided by the Unified partners.
- During competition, athletes play and Unified partners coach and facilitate play to allow athletes to be successful



# Player Competency Rating Form

- Required for all team sports. Fall = flag football, soccer, volleyball
- One Player Competency "Rating Form" per team – will be referred to as **Rating Form** moving forward
- Place athlete initials in boxes where the point value most closely matches their ability
- Form should be completed by a coach during a game-like situation, so the ratings are consistent with playing abilities
- Form must be submitted with Sectional event registration





# Player Competency Rating Form

- Extremely important to complete the top section of the form (this is regularly being missed)

<u>Volleyball - Player Competency Rating Form</u>	
<b>HEAD COACH</b>	
<b>Program/Team Name:</b>	(complete 1 form per team)
<b>Team Composition (Indicate with X):</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Coed/Mixed Gender
<b>Team Type (Indicate with X):</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Traditional <input type="checkbox"/> Unified <input type="checkbox"/> Unified Player Development
<b>Team Level: (Indicate with X)</b>	Overall, how would you describe this team: <input type="checkbox"/> High Level <input type="checkbox"/> Average Level <input type="checkbox"/> Low Level <input type="checkbox"/> Developing Level
	<i>Based on Fall Festival    (Div 1-2)    (Div 3-4)    (Div 5-6)    (Div 7-9)</i>
<b>Are there 1+ Libero players (Yes or No):</b>	

# Player Competency Rating Form



Please enter the player's initials in the boxes below the point value that most closely matches their skill competency.

		Please enter the player's initials in the boxes below the point value that most closely matches their skill competency																								
Team Level		Level 1 - Novice					Level 2 - Intermediate					Level 3 - Advanced														
Player Competency Point Values		1				2				3				4				5								
Player Competency - Serving, Passing, Hitting	Serving	Difficulty contacting ball/controlling ball direction; has to serve underhand legally to get ball over net					Legally serves underhand to consistently get ball over net; better ball control direction; may attempt overhand serve					Frequently serves legally underhand with ball control/direction; capable of overhand serve with some ball control/contact					Consistently serves overhand over the net with ball control/some direction; some speed on serve					Consistently serves overhand with ball control and into designated areas of the court; can vary speed of serve				
		<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>				
		<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>				
	Passing/Setting	Difficulty completing a forearm pass to a teammate; often unable to control direction of pass; rarely sets					Only completes passes that come directly to him/her; infrequently controls direction of pass; attempts to set teammates					Frequently completes passes received in general area of his/her position with moderate control; occasionally sets teammates and understands rotations					Chooses best pass (overhead/set/forearm) for the situation; regularly completes passes with good directional control; good understanding of rotations					Completes passes accurately with excellent control/direction; capable of controlling offense with passing/setting; thorough understanding of rotations				
		<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>				
		<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>				
	Attacking/Hitting	Periodically makes an uncontested attack over the net; hits ball over net when it comes directly at him/her					Hits ball over net when set to him/her; occasionally moves to a set 1-2 steps away; basic understanding of front row principles					Frequently hits ball over net into opposite court with some control/direction; shows more range to move to set balls					Regularly hits ball over net into opposite court with control/direction; good range to move to set balls; capable of attacking the ball downward					Consistently hits ball over net into opposite court with control/direction; demonstrates ability to jump and attack the ball downward; excellent range				
		<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>				
		<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>					<input type="text"/>				

# Player Competency Rating Form

- Coach - don't forget to answer the questions at the end of the form

	<b>Coach(es) Assessment of Team- Please provide feedback related to the following topics</b>	
<b>Team Competencies</b>	Team longevity and chemistry (How long the team has been playing together? Has there been a consistent/core group? Do the players understand each other's playing style?)	
	Are there any players that possess higher ability skill sets when compared to their teammates? For example, are there any players that are quick off of their feet and/or possess above average jumping ability? Are there any players that stand 8' or taller and can use their height to their advantage?	
	Does the team try to use all 3 contacts? Does the team regularly attempt to pass to the setter? Does the team play with a designated setter(s)?	

# Winter Season

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- [Winter Season Rollout - webinar recording](#)
- [Site Registration OPEN now – September 1](#)
- [Winter calendar 2023-24](#)
  - Season start date:
    - Winter Games sports must begin training by Dec 15 (*and complete 8 weeks of training prior to Winter Games, noted due to holiday break*)
    - Indoor Winter Games sports must begin training by Jan 5
    - Dryland training counts as training! Teams that can't access snow or facilities this early in the season should plan to begin dryland training by these dates.

# Bowling

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- There will no longer be Bowling Sectionals
- Regions will host events that will serve as qualifiers for Indoor Winter Games
- Additional qualifying opportunity:
- SOPA will pilot a **SOPA Bowling League** during a defined season from December – February, not required for advancement to Indoor Winter Games this year but will be a requirement in future years.
- Scores will be collected on a weekly basis
- Regional and State level Leaderboards will be posted each week.
- Teams will have the ability to opt-in to this opportunity this year. More information will be shared in early fall.

# Cross Country Skiing

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- Will no longer be offered at Winter Games, will become locally popular sport
- Dwindling participants and poor athlete experience at the event (2023: Lancaster 1, Somerset 1 – prior to 2020: Chester 1 and Erie a few)
- Majority of participants in Winter Games have come from Maryland and Delaware
- Sue Putman (Somerset County, Region 8) will offer an Invitational if there are athletes still interested in training

# Floorball

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- Floorball coaches training will be held on Saturday, October 14
- We are bringing in sport experts from Texas to train our staff, lead volunteers and coaches
- If you are interested in attending, please complete this quick [interest form](#), location will be determined once we have a better idea of interest.
- The initial target for this sport will be higher level Floor Hockey Teams.
- Looking to demo and allow athletes to try the sport during 2024 Indoor Winter Games
- We anticipate this will be an offering beginning in the 2024-25 season
- You can find more information, equipment and resources: <https://www.floorballplanet.com/>

**THANK YOU**

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