



## I. So you're looking to hold an Invitational Competition...

- This is an outline to provide some ideas on how to setup and manage a SOPA Invitational for Local Programs
- Please realize that you are not alone in these preparations. The state staff members are here for your support. Please contact your respective Field or Competition Director with any questions or for more information.

## II. Determine Basics for your event

- a. Some questions to ask yourself:
  - i. Which sport(s) will we host?
    1. Which sport(s) do our athletes need more competition opportunities?
    2. May go without saying, but make sure that you have enough athletes at an appropriate level for the competition
  - ii. What are strengths of our Management Team?
  - iii. Who else can we bring into help run this event?
  - iv. What facility/facilities do we have access to?
  - v. When will the event be held?
    1. Be sure it does not overlap with other events you may plan on attending (Large Invitationals, Sectionals or State Games)

## III. Secure Venue and Appropriate Support

- a. Local and accessible
  - i. You want to make sure that the venue of choice is fairly easily accessible.
  - ii. Depending on the numbers that you invite and the potential growth of the event, you may have many cars, vans, and possibly busses delivering the participants. So you want to make sure the venue is accessible to these vehicles.
- b. Parking availability
  - i. In a similar manner, these vehicles, along with volunteers and spectators are going to require parking. It is an aspect of big events that can be overlooked, but you want to make sure there is ample parking for all in attendance.
- c. Contract/Event approval through your Field Director
  - i. When securing a venue, there is required paperwork.
  - ii. Your local Field Director will be able to help you manage this process.
  - iii. For all of our competitions, the necessary contracts need to be vetted by our insurance company: ASI. The Field Department can help you manage the contracts
- d. Competition Directors and Technical Delegate support
  - i. The Competition Staff can help you manage all of the information contained within this outline.
  - ii. Another important resource is our state Sport Management Teams (SMT). Each sport has a statewide Director and a Management Team of technically proficient individuals in their sport. They are a great source of help in managing your competition.

## IV. Planning Meetings

- a. When
  - i. When preparing for a large event, a committee will help ease the burden on those in charge.
  - ii. For our Sectional and State events, we hold 6-8 committee meetings to make sure all committee members are prepared to manage their responsibility
  - iii. Depending on how much time you have in advance of the event and the availability of the committee; these meetings can be weekly, bi monthly, or monthly.
- b. Who should be present
  - i. The committee should contain a minimum of 4 individuals, each of whom can oversee subcommittee members. Vital roles are:
    1. Event Director (most likely you)
      - a. Responsible for the overall direction of the event
      - b. Manages the big picture
    2. Competition Chair: the Local Program's sport and Competition Coordinator, or a Coach that is well versed in the sport
      - a. Prepares for the details of the competition itself (schedules, etc)
      - b. Establishes divisions as appropriate
      - c. Recruits sport specific support (officials, timers, etc)
    3. Registration and Computers: most likely the program's Database Coordinator
      - a. Responsible for the distribution of information
      - b. Collects registration information in advance of the event
      - c. Manages event data in GMS
      - d. Produces pertinent event day information (handbooks, credentials, etc)
      - e. Manages day of registration, reporting scratches and activations to Competition Committee
    4. Special Events: A well organized, enthusiastic, and reliable volunteer
      - a. Responsible for Opening Ceremonies, Awards Ceremonies, and Olympic Village (when applicable).
        - i. Please keep a focus on making these events athlete lead and focused.
      - b. Recruits personnel for ceremonies (OC Emcee, Guest Speakers, Awards Announcer, Awards Presenters, etc)
      - c. Produces scripts and flow for each of the ceremonies
- c. What to discuss – Various topics regarding the Competition should be covered at each meeting. It is important that the committee members are well aware of the progress of each committee. The Event Director should give a general overview of the direction of the event, followed by committee reports on their responsibilities. Those topics should include, but are not limited to:
  - i. Opening Ceremonies
  - ii. Meals
  - iii. Awards
  - iv. Volunteers
  - v. Competition/venue management
    1. Equipment needs
    2. Schedules for competition

- 3. Divisioning
- 4. Officials (if applicable)
- vi. Olympic Village (if applicable)
- vii. Software Support
- viii. Registration
- ix. Risk Management

## V. Mailing/Invitations (Invitational)

- a. Determining who will be invited
  - i. Use the Field Department as a resource to determine other programs in your area that have athletes training in the sport in which you are holding the invitational
- b. Event Information
  - i. With the aid of the Competition Department, pertinent event information (schedules, entry forms, etc) should be compiled and sent to the programs that are going to be invited.
- c. Registration Information
  - i. Sport Specific forms that will generate entry information and coach/volunteer registration for the day of the event
- d. GMS set-up and data management
  - i. GMS is a wonderful tool that will aid in the preparation and execution of the event.
  - ii. State Competition staff is always willing to support set up and data management for the event. Contact Mike Ermer: [mermer@specialolympicspa.org](mailto:mermer@specialolympicspa.org) for help.

## VI. Special Events

- a. Opening Ceremonies (OC)
  - i. Emcee (6-8 weeks before event search for MC, guest speaker or Celebrity)
    - 1. We suggest having an athlete co-emcee, if possible.
  - ii. Create a script and send to individuals who are working on OC (4 weeks before event)
  - iii. National Anthem/ Flag (MUST have – if you have an athlete that likes to perform, it is a nice touch)
  - iv. Oaths - 1 Coach (required) , 1 Athlete (required), 1 referee (if applicable)- to lead the group in the Special Olympic oaths
  - v. Walk thru, review script- insure everyone who needs a copy has one committee, volunteers with key roles, emcee/co emcee (2 hours prior)
  - vi. Items you may need:
    - 1. Chairs (for speakers and guests if seating is not available)
    - 2. Podium
    - 3. Sound system or portable speakers with microphone (if needed)
- b. Awards Ceremony
  - i. Awards are an important part of Special Olympics competition.
  - ii. All athletes who compete in a Special Olympics competition shall receive recognition for their effort in the form of a medal or ribbon.
  - iii. Medals should be given for 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> place and ribbons signifying each athlete's place of finish for 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> place, as well as participation.
    - 1. At the local level of competition, 1<sup>st</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> place ribbons may be used.
  - iv. An athlete who is disqualified or does not finish an event shall be given a participation ribbon.

- v. An Award Ceremony MUST be conducted at every Special Olympic competition, local and state level.
- c. Award Ceremony checklist
  - i. Announcer (a script should be provided)
  - ii. Presenter(s) (for example, athlete leaders, local dignitaries, professional athletes, law enforcement officers, etc.)
  - iii. Table to display awards, awards presentation tray, awards music, adequate sound equipment
  - iv. Sufficient number of 1st-8th place medals or ribbons and sufficient number of participation ribbons
- d. Olympic Village (Optional)
  - i. Solicit Local high schools, clubs, sponsors to have activities, crafts or games to keep the athletes busy while they are not competing
    - 1. Will need tables and possibly chairs for O-Town

## VII. Competition

- a. Collect registration
  - i. Prior to the event, allow yourself ample time to manage data entry and time to track down missing information and corrections for misinformation
  - ii. At the event, allow time after registration and before competition to make last minute adjustments
- b. Creating schedules
  - i. A well thought out schedule is important for an event to run smoothly
  - ii. Schedule the entire day, from Registration through Awards to make sure you have a complete, comprehensive event and volunteer coverage in all areas.
  - iii. Competition schedules can vary depending on attendance and divisioning. It is a good practice to have several variations of the schedule to accommodate last minute changes when these situations arise.
- c. Ordering equipment and supplies for venues
  - i. Make sure you have a comprehensive inventory of your sport equipment
  - ii. Order in advance to make sure that you will have the necessary equipment for your invitational
- d. Officials
  - i. Officials are vital for quality team sport competitions
  - ii. We have developed a relationship with the PIAA in an attempt to recruit certified officials to volunteer at many of our competitions.
  - iii. With enough lead time, there is a very good chance that we can work with the PIAA to have certified officials in attendance at your event
- e. Risk Management/Medical
  - i. Have contingency plans for weather related issues
  - ii. Make sure all of the athletes have proper medical paperwork submitted to SOPA and the coaches bring a hardcopy for each athlete to the event.
  - iii. Make sure all coaches have completed SOPA required paper work
    - 1. As a reminder ALL coaches must now have: Protective Behaviors, General Orientation, CRC and Concussion Training complete.
  - iv. Need to have proper medical coverage at your event – can be a Certified Athlete Trainer, nurse, doctor or EMT.
  - v. Make sure you have a copy of the facility Emergency Action Plan and Evacuation plans.

## VIII. Week of Preparation

- a. Divisioning
  - i. Work with your sport experts or the SOPA Competition Staff to division your event properly.
  - ii. See information on divisioning:  
<http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/Sports/Divisioning.aspx>
  - iii. The use of GMS will aid in quick and efficient divisioning
- b. Event Schedule Finalization
  - i. When you have an idea of the participation, you can put the final touches on the event schedule.
  - ii. Make sure you have ample time for preliminary competitions, when necessary
- c. Walkthrough of Special Events (OC, Awards)
  - i. The week of the event, it is imperative to have a walkthrough of Opening Ceremonies, make sure to involve, when possible, special guests (especially any Law Enforcement for the torch entrance)

## IX. Event Day

- a. Registration
  - i. With a subcommittee of 3-4 volunteers, set up an assembly line for registration
  - ii. There should only be one individual registering each program, normally the HOD, this will minimize the traffic in the registration area
  - iii. Registration materials should include credentials, handbooks, and day of schedules for each program
- b. Scratches
  - i. Scratches are typically unavoidable.
  - ii. These changes need to be communicated between the Registration Committee and the Competition Committee to ensure all athletes are accounted for

## X. Post Event

- a. Thank you letters to key volunteer/sponsors
- b. In-kind letters to business who donated product
- c. Evaluations
  - i. If applicable – can be used to gather feedback from participants, sponsors, committee, etc.
- d. Reporting/Distribution of Results
  - i. Compile final results and post to public website or email to all participating counties/coaches.