

**Special Olympics Pennsylvania  
Athlete/Unified Partner Nomination Criteria  
2022 USA Games - Orlando, FL**

USA Games is a highly unique event that presents stresses and challenges unlike ANY other Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) local, invitational or state event. Each Local Program/Coach must be sure the athlete(s) they recommend will be able to physically, mentally, emotionally and SAFELY handle the undertaking; including lengthy and often uncomfortable travel conditions via plane, bus, car, etc., the ability to safely handle strange surroundings, the ability to share living space with other athletes, the ability to take instruction and direction from unfamiliar coaches, the ability to safely handle LONG waits of several hours in the heat, 5+ miles of walking daily, adapting to sudden schedule changes, safely and thoroughly handling all of their own toileting/showering/bathing/hygiene needs, the ability to take medication with minimal assistance, being away from home/family, the ability to interact with others in a positive and friendly manner, safely handle large crowds/loud noises/bright lights etc. While it is an honor and a privilege to be selected to Team Pennsylvania and to compete at USA Games, it is imperative that all athletes have a safe and positive experience. The nomination process is extremely important in ensuring the athlete has a positive experience. **The onus falls on each Local Program to carefully screen and recommend athletes that will be capable of having a successful USA Games experience in their chosen sport and outside of the sports venue.**

***Athlete/Unified Partner Nomination Criteria***

**Please review the criteria for each Athlete/Unified Partner you are nominating from your Program. Adhering to the criteria is very important. Please keep in mind the requirements of the schedule and competition at this level is not for all athletes involved in Special Olympics. It is imperative you adhere to the Nomination Criteria.**

In order for an Athlete/Unified Partner to be eligible for nomination to USA Games, they must qualify under the guidelines of the *Criteria for Advancement to Higher Level Competition* in the Special Olympics Sports Rules, Article I and demonstrate good sportsmanship and the ability to function well as a part of a team. Athlete/Unified Partners must not only be dedicated to their sport, but must also have the ability to commit extra time to training, travel to training camp and outside competition and be involved in other Team Pennsylvania activities as determined by SOPA and SO USA. In addition, each Athlete/Unified Partner must meet all the individual criteria for their Nomination to the Team Pennsylvania Delegation:

**Athlete/Unified Partner Eligibility**

**The Athlete/Unified Partner must be from a Special Olympics Pennsylvania Local Program and must be at least 14 years of age (prior to the Games Opening Ceremonies).** The Athlete/Unified Partner must have submitted the athlete pre-selection questionnaire, actively participated in at least one Commit to Fit activity, and have successfully participated in an overnight SOPA state level event;

The Local Program must support the Athlete/Unified Partners nomination and cover the assessment for the Athlete/Unified Partner to SOPA. **Further,** the Athlete/Unified Partner must be registered and in good standing with their Local Program and active with the Program.

**NOMINATION CRITERIA**

- Athlete/Unified Partners must be enrolled and compete in their respective sport for a minimum of 2 years prior to the **year** preceding their nomination to the USA Games;

- Each Athlete/Unified Partner nominated must attend all training sessions as outlined by SOPA. This includes a weekend training camp in the spring of March/April 2022 that will require Athlete/Unified Partners to be away from home, school or work;
- Athlete/Unified Partners must be able to attend Training Camp, March/April 2022 TBD.
- Athlete/Unified Partners must have a local coach identified to work in coordination with the Team Pennsylvania sport specific Coach to train the Athlete/Unified Partner;
- Family/legal guardians or Local Program contacts must be present at all required meetings and orientations as outlined by SOPA;
- Athlete/Unified Partners must be able to answer all questions in the affirmative on the Athlete/Unified Partner Pre-Selection Questionnaire;
- Each Athlete/Unified Partner is subject to pre-delegation screening (Athlete/Unified Partner Nomination Criteria, Athlete/Unified Partner Pre-Selection Questionnaire and Team Pennsylvania Training Camp), to be conducted by the Management Team, **prior** to their Nomination to the Delegation;
- Athlete/Unified Partners must be able to obtain a physician's signature on a USA Games medical;
- Any chronic medical conditions must be well controlled;
- Athlete/Unified Partners must be independent enough to handle themselves within 4:1 supervision during a 5+ hour travel day;
- Athlete/Unified Partner must be able to handle the normal daily schedule of 6:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.;
- Athlete/Unified Partners must adhere to the Special Olympics PA Code of Conduct;
- Athlete/Unified Partners must be able to be assigned to a SOPA Coach (1 coach per 4 Athlete/Unified Partners) for the duration of their travel to/from the Games, during the Games, including in the housing site and competition venues and during training camp prior to USA Games (due to a ratio of 1 coach per 4 athletes placed on the Delegation by the Games Organizing Committee, SOPA is **not** able to assign 1 coach to 1 athlete);
- Athlete/Unified Partners must be able to be away from their families and jobs for approximately a nine (9) days to attend the USA Games;
- Athlete/Unified Partners must be able to **independently or with limited assistance** manage the activities and skills of daily living, ie. toileting, showering, personal hygiene, etc.;
- Athlete/Unified Partners must be comfortable in attending the USA Games with limited contact from family members;
- Athlete/Unified Partners selected to Team Pennsylvania must commit to their Team Pennsylvania coach in advance of the USA Games;
- Athlete/Unified Partner, once selected to the Delegation, may be removed from the Delegation, at any time, for failure to adhere to the principles or fulfill the responsibilities of the criteria as set forth by the Team Pennsylvania Management Team, SOPA, and/or Special Olympics North America. An Athlete/Unified Partner may also be removed from the Delegation for health and safety issues;
- All Athlete/Unified Partners selected to Team Pennsylvania will be under the direction of a Delegation medical staff person who will supervise and may assist the Athlete/Unified Partners in taking their medication(s), including self-medicating Athlete/Unified Partners.

NOTE: Non-Delegation members,(ie. family members, Special Olympics staff, other Athlete/Unified Partners, will not be permitted to travel with the Team Pennsylvania Delegation, including to/from Training Camp or USA Games.

Direct any questions to Team Pennsylvania Head of Delegation Mike Ermer at mermer@specialolympicspa.org.