



## **Welcome to the Special Olympics on-line training program for Protective Behaviors...**

Thank you for being a part of the Special Olympics family. It is through the caring, concern and talents of all our athletes, families and volunteers that Special Olympics has become one of the most respected sports programs in the world. Your participation in the Protective Behaviors Training Program is just one more way that you demonstrate your dedication.

The main objective of this brochure is the prevention of sexual abuse of Special Olympics athletes. It will also briefly address physical and emotional abuse.

### **Actions Special Olympics has Taken to Protect Athletes:**

- On-line and printed protective behavior training
- Volunteer screening requirements in the US
- Codes of conduct for athletes and coaches
- Policy prohibiting volunteers or staff in authority positions from dating athletes

### **Special Olympics US Volunteer Screening Policy**

- The foremost goal of the volunteer screening policy is to protect the safety and well-being of athletes
- Special Olympics screens prospective Class A volunteers
- Class A volunteers are re-screened every three years
- If screening reveals criminal history involving certain offenses, the volunteer is prohibited from participation

### **Who is a Class A Volunteer?**

Definition:

Volunteers who have regular, close, physical contact with athletes

Volunteers in a position of authority or supervision with athletes

Volunteers in a position of trust of athletes

Volunteers who handle substantial amounts of cash or other assets of the Program

Examples:

Coaches, Unified Partners, chaperones, overnight hosts, ALPs mentors, drivers of athletes

May also include Fundraising Event Committee members, board members, and Games Management team members

### **Benefits and Limitations of the Volunteer Screening Policy**

- Volunteer screening is a tool Special Olympics uses to help protect athletes, but it is not fool-proof
- Many predators do not have criminal records
- Your job as a volunteer is to be vigilant and report any behavior or activity that does not appear appropriate based on your personal experience or warning signs identified in this presentation



## Protective Behaviors

### Codes of Conduct

Codes of Conduct are in effect and enforced for athletes, coaches and volunteers.

All Special Olympics Programs are required to have a code of conduct for athletes and coaches. The codes below list the minimum standards set by Special Olympics. Please check with your local Special Olympics Program to see if there is a more restrictive code for that Program. To locate the Special Olympics Program near you, go to [www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org) to use our Program Locator.

In the Coaching Guides section of the website you will find a link to the Basics of Special Olympics. There you will find samples of:

- Athlete Code of Conduct
- Coach Code of Conduct
- Volunteer Code of Conduct

Each Program is responsible for establishing guidelines for sanctions related to breach of these codes of conduct

Included in the codes of conduct are references to the prohibition of volunteers or staff in authority positions dating athletes

### Prevention: Recognizing Sexual Predators

A sexual predator could be anyone. There is no “look” or behavior pattern that sets them apart. Sexual Predators:

- Target vulnerable populations (such as children and individuals with intellectual disabilities);
- Come from all backgrounds;
- Can be male or female;
- Are generally very likeable and have warm personalities;
- May have limited relationships with other adults

Remind athletes and families that not everyone who comes to a Special Olympics event is a volunteer who has been screened and is assumed to be “safe”

### Prevention Sexual Abuse

- For athletes requiring assistance with changing, toileting or showering, it is a best practice if two volunteers are present.
- Private conversations with athletes should be within sight of others who are aware of the conversation
- Hugs should respect both athlete and volunteer limits and never be secretive
- Touching should avoid areas a traditional swimsuit would cover
- Be aware of unusual or inappropriate gifts, trips, affection or attention from a volunteer
- Be aware of relationships between volunteers and athletes that become private or secretive
- Be clear and direct about pointing out inappropriate behavior



### **Inappropriate Behavior**

Inappropriate gifts, trips, outings, or other gestures of affection from a volunteer include:

- Invitations for sleepovers at a volunteer's house;
- Invitations to parties at a volunteer's house where parents or care providers are not included;
- Excessive displays of interest in a particular athlete or group of athletes (such as all male athletes or only athletes under the age of 13);

### **Tips for Travel**

- Be sure to separate sleeping rooms by gender
- Try to assign roommates based on similar age, maturity and size
- Establish a plan for checking on each room/athlete
- Clearly explain rules and behavior expectations of both chaperones and athletes before each trip

### **Emotional Abuse**

- Profanity is never allowed
- Treat athletes with respect and provide encouragement
- Do not allow demeaning nicknames even among teammates
- Discipline should be part of a meaningful behavior modification strategy and never acted on in anger

### **Physical Abuse**

- Corporal punishment is never allowed no matter who says it is OK
- Withholding food or water is maltreatment and strictly prohibited
- Only give prescribed medications in accordance with state regulations (consult your Special Olympics Program office for those regulations)
- Be aware of athlete sensitivity to temperature, sound and touch

### **How to Recognize Abuse**

Changes in behavior may offer the only visible clue that an athlete is the victim of abuse. Abuse causes stress and victims often exhibit stress related behavior

- Depression
- Withdrawal (including loss of interest in participation in Special Olympics)
- Thoughts of or attempts at suicide
- Aggression
- Immature acts
- Sleep disturbances

Uncharacteristic changes in behavior that last for more than a few days indicate a possible need for intervention, but are not a certain indicator of abuse as there are other causes of stress. The absence of behavioral indicators does not indicate a lack of abuse



## Protective Behaviors

### How to Recognize Abuse

Statements by the athlete concerning inappropriate touching or physical harm

Physical indicators of abuse

Questionable injuries such as bruises or lacerations in the soft tissue areas of an athlete's body. Bruises change color during the healing process and bruises of different colors indicate different stages of healing, thereby indicating that the injuries happened on more than one occasion

Injuries to genital areas may indicate sexual abuse; for example, cigarette burns on the inside of the upper leg or on the buttocks

Tether marks or rope burns and abrasions caused by tying wrists, ankles or the neck are also indicators of probable abuse

Some athletes are prone to injuries as a consequence of athletic competition. The location of the injury may indicate whether the injury was due to abuse or competition. Injuries that happen due to athletic competition are most likely to be on the shins, knees, elbows, etc. They are less likely to be on the abdomen, across the back, on the backs of the legs, or on facial cheeks

Possible signs of neglect include

- Unattended medical needs
- Inappropriate clothing for the climate and weather conditions
- Chronic hunger and poor personal hygiene

### Reporting Suspicious Activity

- Suspicious activity should be reported to Special Olympics staff
- Reports will be reviewed and reported as appropriate
- Suspensions may be utilized during investigations
- Special Olympics reserves the right to expel athletes or volunteers as a result of suspected or confirmed physical, sexual or emotional abuse of a Special Olympics athlete

### Be ready to say...

- What makes you think this activity is suspicious
- When you witnessed the activity — or first suspected it

### Who to tell...

- If the activity is during Special Olympics functions, tell local Special Olympics leadership (preferably staff)
- If you suspect that an athlete is in immediate danger, notify the police, and then Special Olympics staff
- If you are a mandatory reporter under your state's laws, report as required by statute in addition to the report you file with Special Olympics
- Reporting is NOT the same as accusing. It just alerts professionals to investigate



### Am I A Mandatory Reporter Under My State's Laws?

- Nearly all states have laws that require some individuals to report suspected abuse (such as teachers, healthcare providers, etc.)
- In some states, everyone is a mandatory reporter
- Utilize the website below to familiarize yourself with your state's reporting requirements (choose the state that you wish to check and "Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse & Neglect" and the click "go")  
[http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws\\_policies/state/](http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/state/)

### Final Quiz

Instructions: Please take the following quiz to test your knowledge of protective behaviors. When you finish, turn this page in to your local Special Olympics program leader. If you give any incorrect answers, you will be allowed to retake the quiz until you answer all the questions correctly. At that time, you should complete the final portion of the brochure, where you will submit your name, address and email address (if you have one) to your State Program, thereby confirming that you have read and understand the information presented in this program.

1. Who determines the punishment for violating a Special Olympics Code of Conduct?

- The Program
- The coach
- Any Special Olympics staff member in a position of authority
- Society

2. Which of the following is NOT an indicator of potential inappropriate behavior?

- Unusual or inappropriate gifts from a volunteer
- Questionable injuries such as bruises or lacerations in the soft tissue areas of an athlete's body
- Two Class A volunteers assisting with changing, showering or toileting
- Relationships between volunteers and athletes that become private or secretive

3. Have you checked to see if you are a mandatory reporter in your State?

- Yes
- No

4. When is it appropriate to withhold water from an athlete?

- Only when the athlete is unprepared or uncooperative
- Never
- When the weather is cool and water isn't really needed
- When the athlete is underachieving and could use a "water break" as motivation

5. What is the rule about what areas of the body to avoid touching?

- Avoid all areas; don't make yourself vulnerable to an accusation!
- Avoid areas where he/she doesn't like to be touched
- Set some groundrules early on, so you know where your athlete is okay with being touched
- Avoid areas a traditional swimsuit would cover



## Protective Behaviors

6. What should you do if you suspect that an athlete is in immediate danger?

- Ask the athlete if he/she has been abused
- Notify the police, and then Special Olympics staff
- Tell the coach or volunteer to take it easy on the athlete
- Notify the athlete's parents

7. When is a private meeting with an athlete appropriate?

- When the athlete is misbehaving and needs to be reprimanded
- When you have something personal to tell the athlete and you want to be out of earshot of his/her teammates
- When it is within sight of others who are aware of the conversation
- A private meeting with an athlete is never appropriate

8. When assigning rooms for an overnight stay, what should you consider?

- What's to consider? Go through your list and group the athletes alphabetically by last name
- Try to put athletes who are friends together
- Athletes of the same community oftentimes prefer to room together
- Separate sleeping rooms by gender and assign roommates based on similar age, maturity and size

9. Is it permissible for a volunteer in an authority position over an athlete to date that athlete?

- Yes
- No
- Depends on the circumstances

10. Is a Unified Partner subject to volunteer screening policies in the US?

- Yes
- No



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**Protective Behaviors****Confirmation**

By completing the form below I am representing that I have reviewed the entire Protective Behaviors training program and understand its contents. Please note that each volunteer must complete the Protective Behaviors training and submit his or her information individually. Multiple volunteers on one submission will not be accepted.

## Your Information

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Select Location/Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_