Special Olympics Maryland
Volunteer General Orientation
Thank you for your interest in volunteering for Special Olympics Maryland. Our Athletes are clearly why we exist, but our volunteers are how we exist. We hope that you will decide to join us in fulfilling our mission of providing outstanding sports training and competition opportunities to children and adults with intellectual disabilities throughout Maryland.

In accordance with the Special Olympics Inc. Volunteer Screening Policy, Special Olympics Maryland requires that all prospective volunteers:

- **Attend a General Orientation and Protective Behaviors session**
  - Objective: Educated volunteers on our history, the sports competition and training we provide for our Athletes, and ultimately how to protect our Athletes.

- **Complete and sign our Volunteer Application Unified Partner Release Form (Version Aug 2012)**
  - Volunteers will receive this application, to complete and sign, at the completion of their General Orientation session. In accordance with the Special Olympics Inc. Volunteer Screening Policy, Special Olympics Maryland conducts criminal background screenings on all volunteers.

- **Compete the Special Olympics Maryland Online Protective Behaviors Quiz**
  - This quiz must be completed within five days of the Volunteer General Orientation. The quiz may be found on the Special Olympics International website, [http://resources.specialolympics.org/protective_behaviors_training.aspx](http://resources.specialolympics.org/protective_behaviors_training.aspx)
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Section I:  
Special Olympics & Milestones  

Special Olympics is an international organization that changes lives by promoting understanding, acceptance and inclusion between people with and without intellectual disabilities. Through year-round sports training and athletic competition and other related programming for nearly 3.5 million children and adults with intellectual disabilities in more than 170 countries, Special Olympics has created a model community that celebrates people's diverse gifts. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics provides people with intellectual disabilities continuing opportunities to realize their potential, develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage and experience joy and friendship.

June 1962  
Eunice Kennedy Shriver starts a summer day camp for children and adults with intellectual disabilities at her home in Maryland to explore their capabilities in a variety of sports and physical activities.

July 1968  
On July 20, 1968, the Chicago Park District and the Kennedy Foundation plan and underwrite the First International Special Olympics Summer Games, held in Chicago's Soldier Field, with 1,000 Athletes with intellectual disabilities from 26 states and Canada competing in athletics, floor hockey, and aquatics.

1980-1981  
Special Olympics launches a training and certification program for coaches and publishes the first Sports Skills Guide.

February 1988  
The IOC, the umbrella organization of the Olympic movement, officially recognized Special Olympics and agreed to cooperate with Special Olympics as a representative of the interests of Athletes with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics is the only organization authorized by the IOC to use the word "Olympics" worldwide.
Section I:
Special Olympics Mission, Philosophy, Vision

Special Olympics Mission
The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for persons eight years of age and older with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics Athletes, and the community.

Special Olympics Philosophy
Special Olympics is founded on the belief that people with intellectual disabilities can, with proper instruction and encouragement, learn, enjoy and benefit from participation in individual and team sports.

Special Olympics believes that consistent training is essential to the development of sports skills, and that competition among those of equal abilities is the most appropriate means of testing these skills, measuring progress and providing incentives for personal growth.

Special Olympics believes that through sports training and competition, people with intellectual disabilities benefit physically, mentally, socially and spiritually; families are strengthened; and the community at large, both through participation and observation, is united in understanding people with intellectual disabilities in an environment of equality, respect and acceptance.

Special Olympics Maryland’s Vision
Special Olympics Maryland will be the leader in lifelong and Unified Sports® programs for individuals with intellectual disabilities, empowering Athletes to be valued members of their community and respected members of society.
Section I:
About our Athletes

To be eligible to participate in Special Olympics, you must be at least 8 years old and identified by an agency or professional as having one of the following conditions: intellectual disabilities, cognitive delays as measured by formal assessment, or significant learning or vocational problems due to cognitive delay that require or have required specially designed instruction. * There is no maximum age limitation for participation in Special Olympics.

All persons who are eligible to participate in Special Olympics training and/or competition programs must register to participate with their local Accredited Program.
Section I: 
*Special Olympics Training and Competition*

**International Sports Federations and National Sports Governing Bodies**

International Sports Federations are recognized by the IOC as the world governing bodies for their respective sports. National Sports Governing Bodies govern and oversee particular sports within their respective countries. All Games held by Special Olympics Programs must comply with the sports rules issued by the National Sports Governing Bodies in their respective countries except where those rules conflict with the Special Olympics Sports Rules (which then take precedence).

**Athlete Training Schedule and Requirements**

Special Olympics believes consistent training is integral to the development of an individual’s sport skill. In addition, competition among those of equal abilities is the most appropriate means of testing these skills, measuring progress, and providing incentives for personal growth.

Each sport season features a 12-week training season featuring practice session and qualifying competitions. Athletes must participate in two sanctioned qualifiers in order to qualify for the State-level competition.

**The five areas that make Special Olympics unique:**

1. **Sports opportunities are provided for all ability levels and athletic interest**

   Special Olympics currently offers over 32 Olympic-style individual and team sports that provide meaningful training and competition opportunities for persons with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics Maryland offers over 20 of these sports at State-level competitions.

2. **The Young Athletes Program** is an innovative sport play program for children with intellectual disabilities and their peers, designed to introduce them to the world of sports prior to Special Olympics eligibility at age 8. Young Athletes was created to meet the physical and developmental needs of children ages 2-7. The program will also offer families the opportunity to share in the success of their future athlete. It will provide an appreciation of fitness and sport for the entire family. Through their preparation for participation in sports, families will see the potential for their child.

3. **Motor Activities Training Program (MATP)** is a program designed for Athletes, within an intellectual disability and/ or other disabilities, requiring the greatest level of assistance and support.
• **Unified Sports®**

Special Olympics Maryland is working in partnership with more than 130 high schools in 18 school systems throughout the state in support of the Fitness and Athletics Equity for Students with Disabilities Law. Maryland is the first state in the country to enact this type of landmark legislation which ensures students with disabilities are provided with equivalent opportunities in interscholastic sports. Special Olympics Maryland Interscholastic Unified Sports® is an inclusive sports training and competition program which brings together students with and without disabilities on high school teams. While Unified Sports® helps schools meet the spirit and intent of the new law, it also leads to amazing outcomes for its participants. Through practices and representation of their schools at competitions, teammates develop strong relationships with each other which carries over into the school community.

Interscholastic Unified Sports® are offered in Tennis, Indoor Bocce, Outdoor Bocce, Track and Field, and Strength and Conditioning.

• **Individual Skills Competitions** are offered for team sports where an Athlete may not be ready for team play

II. **Ability groupings are created through a process of divisioning**

Special Olympic competitions are constructed using the process of divisioning. Divisioning groups Athletes with similar skill and ability, ensuring fair and equitable competition for all Athletes at all ability levels.

III. **Awards are provided to all participating Athletes**

Athletes may be awarded a Gold, Silver, or Bronze medal, a 4th – 8th place of finish ribbon, or a Participation Ribbon.

VI. The established criteria for athlete advancement to higher levels of competition is based on order of finish for each division and random draw.

V. **Special Olympics does not charge a fee for Athletes to train or compete.**
Section I:
Athlete Oath

“Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”

Origin and Meaning
Prior to the first-ever International Special Olympics Summer Games July 20, 1968, Eunice Kennedy Shriver discussed the idea of a Special Olympics oath with Dr. Herb Kramer, then Public Relations Advisor to the Kennedy Foundation.

Shriver reminisces: "I asked Herb to draft something so that the Athletes would feel good about trying, and if they were not successful, they wouldn't feel that they had failed."

Kramer prepared some ideas that Shriver reviewed. She made the final edit on her way to the Opening Ceremonies of the first Special Olympics World Games, which were held in Chicago's Soldier Field, with 1,000 Athletes from 26 U.S. states and Canada competing in athletics, floor hockey, and aquatics. In front of the many spectators and visitors, Shriver memorably opened the first Special Olympics Games with these words:

"In ancient Rome, the gladiators went into the arena with these words on their lips: 'Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.'

"Today, all of you young Athletes are in the arena. Many of you will win, but even more important, I know you will be brave, and bring credit to your parents and to your country. Let us begin the Olympics. Thank you."
Section I: 
Spread the Word, End the Word

When they were originally introduced, the terms “mental retardation” or “mentally retarded” were medical terms with a specifically clinical connotation; however, the pejorative forms, “retard” and “retarded” have been used widely in today’s society to degrade and insult people with intellectual disabilities.

Why "intellectual disability" is replacing "mental retardation"

The R-word, “retard,” is slang for the term mental retardation. Mental retardation was what doctors, psychologists, and other professionals used to describe people with significant intellectual impairment. Today the r-word has become a common word used by society as an insult.

Because of this, Special Olympics, Best Buddies and the greater disability community prefers to focus on people and their gifts and accomplishments, and to dispel negative attitudes and stereotypes. As language has evolved, Special Olympics and Best Buddies have updated their official terminology to use standard, people-first language that is more acceptable to constituents.

Rosa’s Law

On October 5, 2010, U.S. President Barack Obama officially signed bill S. 2781 into federal law. Rosa’s Law, which takes its name from 9-year-old Rosa Marcellino, removes the terms “mental retardation” and "mentally retarded" from federal health, education and labor policy and replaces them with people first language “individual with an intellectual disability” and “intellectual disability.”

The signing of Rosa’s Law is a significant milestone in establishing dignity, inclusion and respect for all people with intellectual disabilities.

Take the pledge today to ban the use of the R-word!

www.r-word.org
Section II: Volunteer Application & Screening Policy

To ensure we protect our Athletes, as well as our volunteers, family members, spectators, and staff, Special Olympics Maryland provided background screenings on all of our volunteers. Special Olympics Maryland contracts with an accredited national investigative consumer reporting agency to conduct the confidential background screenings, using a screening program available only to qualified nonprofit organizations. The background screening program attempts to identify people who may pose a danger or threat to Special Olympics athletes and other participants.

Volunteers are required to fill out the Special Olympics Maryland Volunteer Application Unified Partner Release Form (Version Aug 2012), in its entirety and sign the application. If a volunteer is 17 years of age or younger, they must complete the Special Olympics Maryland Student-Minor Reference Form in addition to the Special Olympics Maryland Volunteer Application Unified Partner Release Form (Version Aug 2012). Volunteers are required to complete new applications, for re-screening, every 3 years.

Anyone not willing to comply with this policy will be ineligible to volunteer, in any capacity, with Special Olympics Maryland.

Incomplete applications will not be accepted and the individual will be ineligible to volunteer, in any capacity, with Special Olympics Maryland.

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION – DISCLOSURE OF INTENT

Special Olympics Maryland, Inc. (“SOMD”) recognizes that some of the information sought in the attached volunteer application may be of a sensitive nature. We request this information because of the responsibility that we have to protect the well-being and safety of all participants in our program, and to promote a safe environment for all participants, including volunteers. This information will only be used to conduct criminal background, including sex offender registries, and motor vehicle screenings as mandated by Special Olympics, Inc. policy.

SOMD’s policy directs all SOMD employees and volunteers to maintain the confidentiality of all information obtained as part of the volunteer application process, and we keep all sensitive and confidential information in a secure location.

Should you have any questions concerning the volunteer application, or SOMD’s confidentiality policy, please feel free to contact Ashley Newnan, Director of Volunteer Management, 410.242.1515.
Section II:
Protecting Special Olympics Athletes

To achieve the mission of Special Olympics, those responsible for supervising Special Olympics Athletes in both training and competition must take positive steps to protect Athletes as well as other participants.

- To prevent physical abuse:
  - No corporal punishment will be used by Special Olympics staff or volunteers.
  - No water or food will be withheld as a form of punishment.

- To prevent emotional abuse:
  - No coaches or volunteers will use profanity to Athletes for their performance or behavior.
  - All Athletes will be treated with courtesy and respect. No denigrating and demeaning nicknames for Athletes will be tolerated.
  - All discipline techniques will be constructive and positive. Athletes may not be threatened or intimidated in an attempt to control behavior or to improve performance.

- To prevent sexual abuse:
  - Volunteers may be asked to escort Athletes to/from rest rooms and/or to assist with their changing into uniforms.
  - Physical contact (i.e. hugging) between Athletes and volunteers should be open (not secretive) respecting the limits set by each. Any resistance by the athlete or volunteer to physical contact must be respected.
  - There is no touching of Athletes in places normally covered by swimming suits.
  - If an athlete attempts inappropriate physical contact, a volunteer or staff member should shake hands, do “high fives,” or use some other more socially acceptable form of expression.
  - Educate Athletes, Unified Partners®, coaches/chaperones and family members about appropriate conduct.

Responding to Signs / Allegations of Abuse

1. Report any reasonable suspicion (one based upon observation or disclosure) of any form of abuse or neglect must be immediately to Special Olympics Maryland’s President and CEO (1-800-541-7544 or 410-242-1515

2. The State of Maryland has an immunity provision for people who report suspected abuse which is based upon observation or disclosure.
1. You will be asked to complete a Special Olympics Incident Report as soon as possible. Special Olympics Maryland will contact the police and/or Child/Adult Protective Services.

2. Special Olympics Maryland will immediately suspend the alleged abuser’s contact and involvement in all Special Olympics activities until the allegations are investigated.

3. In addition, Special Olympics Maryland will contact the appropriate protective services agency.

4. If the media contacts you, refer them to the President and CEO of Special Olympics Maryland. Do not comment to the media or anyone else about the alleged incident. The Special Olympics representative will be the only spokesperson to the media.
Section II:
Volunteer Code of Conduct

As a Special Olympics Maryland, Inc. volunteer, I agree that while serving as a volunteer, I will:

1. Provide for the general welfare, health and safety of all Special Olympics Maryland, Inc. Athletes and volunteers.
2. Dress and act in an appropriate manner at all times.
3. Follow the established rules and guidelines of Special Olympics Maryland, Inc., Special Olympics, Inc. and/or any agency involved with Special Olympics Maryland, Inc.
4. Report any emergencies to the appropriate authorities after first taking immediate action to ensure the health and safety of the participants.
5. Abstain from transporting, storing and/or consuming alcoholic beverages, tobacco products and/or illegal substances when responsible for the safety and well being of Athletes. Special Olympics Maryland, Inc. prohibits consumption of alcohol and tobacco during events (24 hours a day) by Athletes and by anyone with athlete responsibilities at a Special Olympics event. Consumption of alcohol, tobacco and/or illegal substances shall not be permitted at any Special Olympics competition venue or training site.
6. Not engage in any inappropriate contact or relationship, including but not limited to, any sexual contact or sexual relationship with any Athletes, volunteers or other participants of Special Olympics Maryland, Inc.

For Coaches:

7. Honor the Special Olympics Coach Oath
8. Adhere to the Coaches’ Responsibilities as established by Special Olympics Maryland, Inc.
Section III:
Special Olympics Inc. Protective Behaviors Online Session & Quiz

Special Olympics requires all volunteers to participate in the Protective Behaviors Training Program. The program's goal is to provide education intended to prevent physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

This is your final step to becoming a Special Olympics Maryland Volunteer! Simply visit the link provided below, within 5 days of completing this Volunteer General Orientation. Once you complete this session and quiz, both you and the Special Olympics program in your state will receive confirmation that you have taken the test.

http://resources.specialolympics.org/protective_behaviors_training.aspx