

HOUSING POLICY

HOUSING & ROOMMATE SELECTION

GENDER

Athletes and volunteers may not share a room with an athlete or volunteer of the opposite sex. U.S. Programs may allow the following exceptions as long as the U.S. Program's written policy clearly allows for such exception.

- Married athletes who are both attending the event as members of a registered delegation. This exception does not apply to the spouse of an athlete who is not participating in the event but attending solely as a spectator.
- Married volunteers who are both attending the event as members of a registered delegation. This exception does not apply if one of the volunteers is required to share a room with an athlete (other than the married couple's child), as this scenario will create a situation whereby an athlete is housed with a volunteer of the opposite sex.
- Family members of the opposite sex who serve as a one-to-one chaperone for the related athlete.
- Housing in a facility that has multiple private rooms in addition to living space (such as a condominium or dormitory). Both males and females may be assigned to one condominium, if necessary, but private rooms may not be shared by individuals of the opposite sex. Chaperones must also be housed in the condominium and the chaperone/athlete ratio (as outlined in the supervision section of the policy) must be maintained.

SUPERVISION

The chaperone/athlete ratio of at least one (1) properly registered chaperone to every four (4) athletes must be maintained during overnight events. Proper supervision can be maintained without having a chaperone present in the room at all times. All chaperones must be screened in accordance with the Special Olympics U.S. Volunteer Screening Policy.

BEST PRACTICES

1. ROOMING ASSIGNMENTS

If athletes will be sharing a room, following is a list of other items to consider when making room assignments:

- Consider matching athletes based on size, level of maturity, ability, and age.
- Assign connecting rooms to those athletes who require additional assistance or supervision if the chaperone will not be in the same room.

2. SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

Whenever possible, each member of the delegation should be assigned their own bed. If bed sharing is required, an athlete may not share a bed with a chaperone unless the chaperone is a parent or sibling of the athlete and has been screened in compliance with the Special Olympics U.S. Volunteer Screening Policy. The following techniques should be considered to help reduce the number of athletes required to share beds:

- Request cots from the facility to increase the number of beds available.
- Utilize air mattresses to increase the number of beds available (check with facility to ensure there is not a policy against the use of air mattresses).
- If bed sharing is required, Programs may consider having athletes pack sleeping bags and require athletes to sleep in their sleeping bag on top of the linens that are provided.

3. SUPERVISION

The following includes suggestions for providing athlete housing supervision:

Hotels – Whenever possible, reserve connecting rooms so that chaperones have direct access to the athletes' room(s). If connecting rooms are not available and the chaperone is in a room separate from the athletes for which they are responsible:

- Ensure that the chaperone has a key to the athletes' room(s)
- Ensure that the athletes know how to reach the chaperone at all times
- Consider using hall monitors

Condo/Dorm (or other facility with multiple private rooms) – Whenever possible, leave the doors to private rooms open so that chaperones can monitor each room.

4. FAMILY MEMBERS

Prohibit family members from staying in athlete housing unless the family member is an official member of the registered delegation and is screened in compliance with the Special Olympics U.S. Volunteer Screening Policy.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

QUESTION: Are athletes who are married to each other permitted to share a room if one athlete is competing and the other is volunteering?

ANSWER: Yes, as long as both athletes are official members of a registered delegation. The married athletes would not be permitted to share a room if one of the athletes were not a member of a registered delegation (for example, a spectator at the event).

QUESTION: Can the chaperone/athlete ratio be maintained during sleeping hours without having a chaperone present at all times?

ANSWER: Yes, examples include, but are not limited to, the following: Chaperones having access to the rooms they are supervising at all times and having a plan to ensure that athletes are in their assigned rooms; Chaperones staying in connecting rooms; and Chaperones checking on athletes on a regular basis throughout the night and ensuring the athletes know how to reach the chaperone, if needed.