

# TRANSGENDER POLICY

Special Olympics is an athlete-centered movement that welcomes athletes with intellectual disabilities of all abilities to participate in sports training and competition. Special Olympics is open to persons with intellectual disabilities age eight and older and offers a Young Athletes program for individuals under the age of eight.

The health and safety of everyone participating in Special Olympics is of paramount importance to the organization. Participants should feel that Special Olympics events are safe, positive and inclusive. Additionally, participants should not be fearful of the reaction of or treatment by other athletes, coaches or volunteers because of the participant's gender identity.

Special Olympics will generally recognize individuals based on the individual's gender identity. For the purposes of this document, "gender identity" is defined as a person's deeply felt internal sense of being male or female. All transgender inquiries need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and carefully considered to ensure compliance with federal, state and local laws, rules and regulations.

The purpose of this document is to provide Programs with guidelines for addressing the most common questions relative to inclusion of transgender participants (athletes, coaches and volunteers).

Consistent with the above principles, the overarching goal of these guidelines is to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all individuals. Discrimination and/or any sort of retaliation against participants based on the participant's gender identity is not acceptable.

## GUIDELINES:

- Awareness and Acceptance** – SO Indiana in collaboration with the County Programs will work proactively as needed to inform and educate coaches, volunteers, athletes, officials and the community to hopefully ensure that the spirit of acceptance and everyone's value are the overarching principles that guide the involvement of a transgender athlete's participation in Special Olympics and the community at large.
- Eligibility to Participate** – Eligible participants, those that meet all other requirements, are permitted to participate in a manner consistent with their gender identity.
- Notice to Special Olympics** – The participant and/or legal guardian must contact the Chief Executive Officer in writing indicating that the participant has a gender identity different than the gender listed on the athlete's Medical and/or Application form and that the participant desires to participate in a manner consistent with their gender identity. This notification must be received by the entry deadline before their first involvement as a transgender participant.
- Athlete Medical** – The Athlete Medical Form does not need to be updated based on gender identity unless the athlete is undergoing gender reassignment therapy under the direction of a licensed medical professional. The athlete's preferred name should be noted on the Athlete Medical Form for administrative and emergency purposes, as this is the name that Programs use when referencing or addressing the athlete.
- Confidentiality** – Except for the notice required in #3 above, participants affected by this policy have the right to confidentiality in all matters governed by SO Indiana.
- Individual Preferences** – Using a case-by-case approach, SO Indiana (when possible) will reach out to the participant and/or the participant's parents/guardians to help define expectations relative to the participant's involvement in Special Olympics as it relates to changing areas, restrooms, showers, and housing.
- Facilities** – Special Olympics (as requested and to the extent possible) will allow the transgender participant access to the desired facility (i.e., locker-room, restroom, etc.) with as little disruption to other participants as possible. SO Indiana will seek to provide gender-neutral restrooms and changing facilities open to all participants for all activities and will notify all participants of the location of the gender-neutral facilities.
- Housing** – In events where an overnight stay is required, a transgender athlete may be housed individually per their gender identity or with a family member / caregiver as approved by the athlete and appropriately registered by Special Olympics Indiana.  
Any athlete who needs extra privacy / supervision should be accommodated to the extent possible. Per Special Olympics Inc. housing policies, a transgender athlete **cannot** share a room with another Special Olympics athlete.
- Sports Participation** – In keeping with Special Olympics all-inclusive philosophy, Special Olympics will not require medical testing on a blanket basis as part of its divisioning process. SO Indiana will adhere to the athlete divisioning protocol as outlined in the Special Olympics Sports Rules, which emphasizes ability and age more than gender in organizing competition.  
For competition, a transgender athlete will be placed for competition per their gender identity and their ability according to either pre-event entry scores or preliminary round results. Same as for all Special Olympics athletes, if a transgender athlete's performance is 15% better than all other competitors they will be placed in a division of one for competition.  
All participants should have uniforms as outlined in the Special Olympics Sports Rules. No participant will be required to wear a gendered uniform that conflicts with the participant's gender identity.
- Applicability for Local and Area Events.** SO Indiana events are held in a wide variety of facilities across the state. SO Indiana and local volunteers will work collaboratively to organize events where these guidelines are followed to provide for the needs of the transgender athlete just as we do for all Special Olympics athletes within the framework of the host site and the laws of Indiana.