



2026 USA Games

Team Indiana Handbook

June 20 – 26, 2026

Minneapolis, MN

Special Olympics





Overview of 2026 USA Games

General

The 2026 Special Olympics USA Games will bring 3,000 athletes to Minneapolis to compete in a variety of sports. Hosted at some of the region's top athletic facilities including the University of Minnesota and the National Sports Center in Blaine, the USA Games will offer athletes, their coaches, and families a week of national competition against the backdrop of the beautiful Twin Cities.

Team Indiana

For the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games, Team Indiana will be sending athletes and partners to compete in 9 sports (Basketball, Bocce, Bowling, Cornhole, Flag Football, Golf, Powerlifting, Swimming, and Track & Field). The selection process begins with the 2024 EKS Games and concludes with the 2025 Summer Games. No selections will be based on 2026 state championships.

Team Indiana will focus on the team - 9 sports, but only one Team Indiana. We will be prepared physically and mentally for competition. Our success is not determined by medals. Our success is determined by becoming the best we can be – striving for maximum potential.

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Management Team Role Options

Equipment Manager; Family Coordinator; Medical Coordinator; Training Coordinator; Public Relations & Media Coordinator.



Team Composition

Below, Team Indiana's composition is outlined based on female athletes, male athletes, partners, and coaches. Secondly, in Golf, Swimming, Powerlifting, and Track & Field, competitors may be placed in categories/levels which then list the events in those categories/levels. When nominating athletes and partners, be sure those competitors have the ability to compete in the events and/or distances listed for each sport.

In team sports (Basketball and Flag Football), athletes and partners are limited to 1 event. In individual sports, athletes and partners are limited to 3 events – with the following exceptions: Golf (1) and Powerlifting (4).

TENTATIVE

SPORT	TEAM MAKEUP	EVENTS	
Basketball	1 Team 5 athletes (male or female) 5 Unified Partners (male or female) 2 coaches <i>Athletes & coaches will be from same County Program</i>	Unified 5 on 5 Team: Male Division	
Bocce	2 Unified pairs (2 males & 2 females) 1 athlete & 1 partner per pair 1 coach	Singles (<i>athletes only</i>) Unified Doubles Unified 4-Person Team	
Bowling	4 Unified pairs (4 males & 4 females) 1 athlete & 1 partner per pair 1 coach	Singles (<i>athletes only</i>) Unified Doubles Unified 4-Person Team	
Cornhole	4 Unified pairs (4 males & 4 females) 1 athlete & 1 partner per pair 1 coach	Singles (<i>athletes only</i>) Unified Doubles	
Flag Football	1 Team 10 athletes (male or female) 3 coaches <i>Athletes & coaches will be from same County Program</i>	Traditional 5 on 5 Team: Male Division	
Golf	1 Unified pair (female) 1 athlete & 1 partner 2 Individual Golfers (male & Female) 1 coach 2 caddies	Level 2: Unified 9-Hole Alternate Shot (<i>1 female pair</i>) Level 4: Individual Stroke Play – 9- Hole (<i>1 female and 1 male</i>)	
Powerlifting	4 athletes (2 male & 2 female) 1 coach	Combination (Bench, Deadlift & Squat)	
Swimming	4 athletes (2 male & 2 female) 2 coaches (1 male & 1 female) <i>NOTE: athletes may be chosen on a "DIVISION 1" based selection</i>	Category 2 (<i>1 female & 1 male athletes</i>) 25m Backstroke 50m Backstroke 50m Breaststroke 50m Butterfly 50m Freestyle 100m Freestyle Relays (4x25m & 4x50m Free; 4x50m Medley)	Category 3 (<i>1 female & 1 male athlete</i>) 100m Backstroke 100m Breaststroke 100m Butterfly 100m Freestyle 100m Individual Medley 200m Freestyle 200m Individual Medley 400m Freestyle Relays (4x25m & 4x50m Free; 4x50m Medley)
Track & Field	8 athletes (4 male & 4 female) 3 coaches (at least 1 female & 1 male) <i>NOTE: athletes may be chosen on a "DIVISION 1" based selection</i>	Category 2 (<i>2 female & 2 male athletes</i>) 100m Dash 200m Dash 400m Dash Relays (4x100m; 4x400m) Running Long Jump Shot Put Mini Jav	Category 3 (<i>2 female & 2 male athletes</i>) 400m Dash 800m Run 1500m Run Relays (4x100m; 4x400m) Running Long Jump Shot Put Mini Jav



Team Member Requirements – for all athletes, partners, coaches, and management team

- Must be involved in the SOIN program before August 7, 2024.
- Must be nominated by your County Coordinator (excluding support staff).
- Must be in good standing with SOIN.
- Read, sign, and submit the Code of Conduct form.
- Complete, sign, and submit all required registration forms, medical forms, and other forms as needed.
- Must have the ability to function and be away from home for ten days or more.
- Must possess the skills to be able to function as a part of the delegation (e.g. cooperation, sharing, group living, following directions, basic social skills, good behavior, etc.).
- Must be able to travel long distance and stand for long periods of time on a daily basis (excludes applicants in wheelchairs, but still have the stamina for such activities).
- Must be able to lift 25 pounds.
- Must agree to refrain from the use of alcohol and tobacco products during training camps and USA Games.
- Participate in all training camps and attend all portions of those camps.
- Participate in all Team Indiana promotional and fundraising events.
- Must agree to the Team Indiana finance arrangement as outlined later.
- Participate in fitness training program and Healthy Athletes screenings at training camps and at USA Games – athletes and partners required; coaches and support staff are encouraged to participate.

Coach, Unified Partner & Management Team Requirements

- Must be a Class A volunteer with SOIN, according to its Volunteer Management System, which includes:
 - Completed & signed Coach/Volunteer Application,
 - Completed (and passed) criminal background check,
 - Completed Coach/Volunteer Orientation,
 - Completed Online Protective Behaviors training, and
 - Completed Concussion Awareness training.
- FOR COACHES: Achieve Level 1 & 2 coaching certifications of the SOIN Coach Education Program.
 - **Level 1: Coaching Special Olympics Athletes and Coaching Unified Sports online courses.**
 - **Level 2: Sports-Specific Course (online or in-person)**
- FOR COACHES: Develop a training plan for athletes and partners (from October 2025 through the Games), utilizing the SOIN Training program and Unified Fitness Club programs.
 - Training plans will be distributed to athletes and partners at the end of Training Camp 1.
 - Coaches will have time during the training camp to adjust plans based on performance during fitness assessments, Healthy Athletes screenings, and camp practices.
 - But coaches must come to the first training camp with a training plan developed with only minor modifications needed at camp.
- FOR COACHES: Communicate weekly with athletes and partners on training progress and daily nutrition journals.
- FOR COACHES: Report monthly to the HOD and Training Coordinator on athlete and partner training progress.
 - Provide success stories (i.e. weight loss, personal bests achieved) for promotion.
 - Identify issues and barriers.
 - Work with the HOD and Training Coordinator to address issues and overcome barriers.



Nomination Process

Special Olympics Indiana requires that all nominations for athletes, Unified Partners, and coaches be received prior to the State competition for the sport that the individual is being nominated for by filling out the designated athlete, coach, Unified pair, or team nomination form.

There are two exceptions:

- Since there are two State competitions for bowling, bowling nominations will be made available two separate times, prior to the Fall Bowling competition that takes place in the beginning of December and prior to Summer Games Bowling.
- Special Olympics Indiana has received a quota for a female individual golfer and a female Unified team. We will be asking for all female golf nominations in the Spring in preparation for a female only golf competition in May. All male golf nominations must be submitted in September as laid out in the timeline on page 10.

The application for the Team Indiana Management team will be open until October 7, 2024, or will be closed sooner if qualified applicants are identified prior to the deadline.

Selection Process

The selection process is outlined in SOI's *General Sports Rules* and will be followed by SOIN. Our quota is described earlier in this handbook.

- If the number of eligible (nominated) athletes or teams does not exceed the quota, all athletes and teams shall advance, provided the athletes and teams compete in the state championship for that sport and meet the team member requirements as listed above.
- If the number of eligible (nominated) athletes or teams exceeds the quota, athletes or teams that advance shall be selected as follows:
 - Priority is given to first-place finishers from all divisions of the sport/event in the state championship. If the number of first place finishers exceeds the quota, select athletes or teams to advance by random draw.
 - If there are not enough first-place finishers to fill the quota, all first-place finishers shall advance. The remaining quota shall be filled by a random draw of second place finishers from all divisions of the sport/event in the state championship.
 - If the quota is large enough for all second-place finishers to advance, the remaining quota shall be filled by a random draw of third-place finishers from all divisions of the sport/event in the state championship.
 - Repeat this process, adding each place of finish as necessary, until the quota is filled.
- These procedures apply to both individual and team sports.
- Exceptions apply for quota positions given to athletes achieving the Division 1 performance standard in a particular event automatically places the athlete at the top of the selection process. "Division 1" has replaced what was previously known as high performance standards. Those event standards are:

○ Swimming – 50yd Freestyle	Males 31.01	Females 39.15
○ Track & Field – 100m Dash	Males 14.25	Females 17.46



Priority

Over the course of the 2025-26 (July 2025 to June 2026) training period leading up to USA Games, conflicts may arise between an athlete's, partner's, or coach's local participation and Team Indiana commitments. Upon being named to

Team Indiana, no matter athlete, partner or coach, the team member's first Special Olympics priority is Team Indiana. Scheduling decisions will favor Team Indiana in all instances.

Alternates

During the selection process for athletes, partners and coaches, alternates will be included. These alternates will replace Team Indiana members when members are no longer able to attend USA Games or no longer comply with team requirements. In cases where the alternate is not needed to replace a team member, the alternate will not attend USA Games.

Training Plan

The official training season for the USA Games begins July 1, 2025, for all athletes and partners. The training season concludes with the Closing Ceremonies of USA Games. Training will be approximately 11 ½ months.

During this time, athletes and partners may participate in other sports at the local, area or state level. However, their #1 focus must be their USA Games sport. At all times, they should be in training in that sport; complemented by secondary sports.

The Special Olympics fitness program tests athletes at various physical fitness stations and educates them at nutritional stations. In the end, each coach will work with athletes and partners identifying areas of excellence and areas for improvement. In addition, SO Indiana has developed a generalized sports training program to strengthen the "core" area of the body. An athlete, if properly trained in this program, will improve physical fitness and athletic performance.

TRAINING EXPECTATIONS

- At Training Camp 1, athletes and partners will be introduced to their fitness plan as outlined by the Training Coordinator. Athletes and partners will be expected to train in accordance with the fitness plan starting in July 2025.
- From Training Camp 1 through the USA Games, athletes and partners are expected to train in accordance with the fitness plan and to the sport-specific training plan as outlined by the coach.
- Throughout the training season, athletes and partners are expected to keep a daily nutritional journal.
- Athletes and partners are expected to communicate weekly to the coach their training progress and nutritional journal entries.
- The "Training Plan General Guidelines" section (below) outlines the training plan progression from beginning to the Games. Specific plans will be provided upon selection and upon dismissal from training camps. "Sport-Specific" refers to the athlete's or partner's USA Games sport. Secondary sports (the sport in which the athlete or partner is participating for their County) should not be included in the training guidelines below.
- NOTE: Training Camp 1 will include 4 fitness workouts and 1 team practice. Athletes and partners are to arrive to the first training camp in shape.

FITNESS ASSESSMENTS / HEALTHY ATHLETES SCREENINGS

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| • Training Camp 1: | August 2025 | Mandatory |
| • Training Camp 2: | October 2025 | Mandatory |
| • Training Camp 3: | January 2025 | Mandatory |
| • Training Camp 4: | April 2025 | Mandatory |
| • USA Games: | As schedule allows | Mandatory |



Training Camps

At designated times during the training period, Team Indiana’s athletes, partners, coaches and support staff will meet for team building, review important materials, receive updates, practice, and better prepare the individual and team for Seattle.

TRAINING CAMP 1

- MANDATORY for all athletes, partners, coaches & management team.
- Site: Plane Pull Site
- August-September 2025
- Meals & lodging are provided.
- Objectives:
 - Participate in team building exercises.
 - Practice.
 - Select events, qualifying scores, relay order.
 - Finalize entries, registration forms & medicals.
 - Take photos for credentials & Team Indiana promotional materials.
 - Host mock interview for athletes, partners & coaches to identify the “hidden media gems”.
 - Take measurements for uniforms & team clothing.
 - Update on fundraising goals.
 - Host fitness training program and/or Healthy Athletes screenings.
- Participants: Team Indiana only.
- Family members may transport Team Indiana members to and from the training camp but will not stay – other than an information meeting on Sunday morning.

TRAINING CAMP 2

- MANDATORY for all athletes, partners, coaches & management team.
- Higher Ground Retreat Center, West Harrison IN.
- Friday - Sunday, October-November 2025
- Lunch is provided.
- Objectives:
 - Participate in team building exercises.
 - Practice
 - Review & track progress towards training plans.
 - Host fitness training program and/or Healthy Athletes screenings.
 - Update on fundraising goals.
 - Update family & friends on USA Games news.
 - Take re-measurements for team uniforms (if needed).
- Participants: Team Indiana & family members; though family members are on their own for lunch and will not participate in all sessions or activities.

TRAINING CAMP 3

- MANDATORY for all athletes, partners, coaches & management team.
- Site TBD.
- Saturday, January 2026
- Lunch is provided.
- Objectives:
 - Participate in team building exercises.
 - Practice
 - Review & track progress towards training plans.
 - Host fitness training program and/or Healthy Athletes screenings.
 - Update on fundraising goals.
 - Update family & friends on USA Games news.
- Participants: Team Indiana & family members; though family members are on their own for lunch and will not participate in all sessions or activities.



TRAINING CAMP 4

- MANDATORY for all athletes, partners, coaches & management team.
- Site TBD.
- Saturday, April 2026
- Lunch is provided.
- Objectives:
 - Participate in team building exercises.
 - Review & track progress towards training plans.
 - Hold final opportunity for team practices before the Games.
 - Host fitness training program and/or Healthy Athletes screenings.
 - Update on fundraising goals.
 - Update family & friends on USA Games news.
- Participants: Team Indiana & family members; though family members are on their own for lunch and will not participate in all sessions or activities.

Finance Arrangement

As we have done the past three USA Games, Team Indiana fundraises as a team. In Minneapolis, we compete as a team; and, we fundraise as one team – one unit – one program. As the Musketeers once said, “All for one; and one for all”.

If this arrangement does not work for your County Program, then you should not nominate an athlete, partner, or coach for Team Indiana. The arrangement also creates fundraising opportunities not always used by County Programs. As a result, County Programs will not use their current fundraising events and strategies towards Team Indiana.

County Programs are responsible for \$150 per person only – that is when Team Indiana reaches its fundraising goal of \$111,250. With the projected surplus, portions of the surplus will be directed back to the County Programs (see below).

Fundraising events and promotions are requirements, just as attendance at training camps. If athletes, partners, coaches, or support staff do not support the fundraising efforts of Team Indiana, then the HOD and Chief Development Officer reserve the right to replace those individuals with the designated alternates.

The commitments are outlined below, including the SOIN’s commitment to Team Indiana (25% of the overall budget).

COMMITMENT FEE

- All County Programs with selected athletes, partners, coaches & support staff agree to a \$150 “commitment” fee per person.
- Commitment fees are due within one month of being selected.
- Commitment fees are non-refundable.
- For athletes, partners, and coaches, commitment fees are the responsibility of your County Program, and fees will be transferred from your County’s account.
- Management team members not affiliated with a county program will be responsible for the balance of reaching the fundraising minimum.

PLANE PULL (August 2025)

- All athletes, partners, coaches, and management team will be part of Team Indiana’s 2025 Plane Pull teams.
- Participation is a requirement.
- Plane Pullers will raise a minimum of \$1,100 each.



CORPORATE SPONSORS

- SOIN guarantees at least 25% of Team Indiana's budget will be covered by corporate sponsorships.
- Coaches, athletes, partners, and management team members may secure additional corporate sponsors, which will count towards their fundraising goals.
- Team Indiana members must coordinate corporate sponsorship efforts with the HOD & Chief Development Officer, prior to asking and meeting with potential corporate sponsors.

ACCOUNTING

- All contributions for Team Indiana, whether Plane Pull, corporate sponsorships, etc., will be deposited directly into the Team Indiana account, utilizing the SOIN consolidated accounting system.
- Team Indiana donations will NOT be deposited into the County Program's account.
- Online donations will be received using Team Indiana's FirstGiving pages, created by SOIN.
- FirstGiving individual giving pages will be created and maintained by SOIN, specifically the Chief Development Officer. No other online fundraising websites will be allowed.
- Any other financial arrangements must receive prior authorization from Team Indiana's HOD or Chief Development Officer.

FINANCIAL SURPLUS

If fundraising revenue exceeds expenses, the surplus will be divided between County Programs with selected Team Indiana members and SO Indiana as follows:

- 5% of the surplus will be directed to the County Program of the athlete, partner, or coach raising the most funds from the 2025 Plane Pull.
- The remaining surplus will be divided between the County Programs with selected Team Indiana members and SO Indiana, proportionate to each team member's fundraising efforts. For example, if your County Program's team members collectively raise 10% of the overall fundraising revenue, your County Program will receive 10% of the remaining surplus (after 5% each awarded to top Plane Pull fundraiser).
- Any team member failing to fundraise the minimum amount is subject to team dismissal and is ineligible for the share of the surplus for their County Program.

FINANCIAL SHORTFALL

- If fundraising revenue does not exceed expenses, the shortfall will be the responsibility of SOIN (50%) and the County Programs (50%).
- The County Programs' portion of the shortfall will be distributed proportionally to the number of athletes, partners, coaches, and support staff on Team Indiana.
- Management team members not affiliated with a county program will be responsible for the balance of reaching the fundraising minimum.





TIMELINE

August 2024	Distribution of FLAG FOOTBALL, CORNHOLE, GOLF (MALE) nomination forms.
September 5, 2024	GOLF (MALE) nominations due – Athletes, Unified pairs, & coaches.
September 23, 2024	FLAG FOOTBALL & CORNHOLE nominations due – Athletes, Unified pairs, & coaches.
October 7, 2024	Management Team applications due
November 2024	Distribution of BOWLING nomination forms BOWLING nominations due (Fall bowling season) – Unified pairs & coach
December 2024	State Unified Bowling Tournament – Indianapolis
January 2025	Distribution of BASKETBALL team nomination forms.
February 2025	BASKETBALL nominations due – team & coaches.
March 2025	Men’s, Women’s, & Unified State Basketball Tournament – Westfield Distribution of FEMALE GOLF nomination forms.
April 2025	Distribution of BOCCE, BOWLING, POWERLIFTING, SWIMMING and TRACK & FIELD nomination forms. FEMALE GOLF nominations due – Athlete & Unified Pair
May 2025	BOCCE, BOWLING, POWERLIFTING, SWIMMING and TRACK & FIELD nominations due – athletes, Unified pairs (Bocce & Bowling), & coaches.
June 2025	Summer Games – Terre Haute Announcement of Team Indiana
July 2025	Training season begins for Team Indiana athletes and partners selected to date.
August 2025	TRAINING CAMP 1 - Plane Pull – Indianapolis Team Indiana entry deadline with USA Games Organizing Committee
October 2025	TRAINING CAMP 2 – October 17-19
January 2026	TRAINING CAMP 3 – January 17 (Site TBD)
April 2026	TRAINING CAMP 4 – April 25 (SITE TBD)
June 2026	June 18 – Team Indiana arrives to team hotel for departure. June 19 – Departure for USA Games June 20 – Opening Ceremonies & Games begin! June 26 – Closing Ceremonies June 27 – Return home