

# Protective Behaviors

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*Delaware*



# Welcome to the Special Olympics Protective Behaviors Training



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 goal of this presentation is prevention of sexual abuse of Special Olympics athletes. It also addresses physical and emotional abuse.

Now it is time to start!

# Prevention

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# 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 those regulations)
- Be aware of athlete sensitivity to temperature, sounds, and touch

# 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



# 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

# 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)

# Sexual Abuse



- For athletes requiring assistance with changing, toileting, or showering, 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 athletes and volunteer limits and never be secretive
- Touching should avoid areas a traditional swimsuit would cover
- Be aware of relationships between volunteers and athletes that become private or secretive
- Be clear and direct about pointing out inappropriate behavior





# 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”.

# Actions Special Olympics has Taken to Protect Athletes

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# Code 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, use our [Program Locator](#).
  - [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 those codes of conduct.
- Included in the codes of conduct are references to the [prohibition of volunteers or staff in authority positions dating athletes](#).

# Benefits and Limitation 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



# 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

# 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

# Actions Special Olympics has taken to protect athletes



- The 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

# 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 Child Welfare Information Gateway website below to familiarize yourself with your state's reporting requirements. On the site, choose the state that you wish to check and under the "Child Abuse and Neglect" heading, check "Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse & Neglect" and then click "Go"

- [Child Welfare Information Gateway Website](#)



# 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

# Reporting Suspicious Activity



## 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

# 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 area of an athletes body. Bruises change color during the healing process and bruises of different color indicated 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 of the neck are also indicators of probable abuse

# 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.

# Final Quiz

Please follow the link below for the online quiz to test your knowledge of Protective Behaviors

[Protective Behaviors quiz](#)

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