



**Special
Olympics
Pennsylvania**



Winter 2023-2024

Snowshoeing

Nov. 16, 2023



PRE-SEASON REMINDERS



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Today's Agenda

- Pre-Season Reminders
- Snowshoeing Updates
- Coach Season Planning
- Volunteer Updates
- 2024 State Competition
- Questions

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SEASONS AT A GLANCE



	SPRING	FALL	WINTER
Coach Site Registration	Nov. 1 - Dec. 1	April 1 - May 1	August 1 - Sept. 1
Athlete, Unified Partner, Volunteer Signup	Dec. 15 - Jan. 15	May 15 - June 15	Sept. 15 - Oct. 15
Season Length	March - June	August - November	December - March
Sports Offered	Athletics (Track & Field), Basketball, Equestrian, Golf, Gymnastics, Softball, Swimming, Tennis	Bocce, Bowling, Flag Football, Long Distance Running/Walking, Powerlifting, Soccer, Volleyball	Alpine Skiing, Bowling, Figure Skating, Floor Hockey, Snowboard, Snowshoe, Speed Skating

Access Sign Ups on the

- **SOPA website:**

[https://specialolympicspa.org/
get-involved/sports-sign-ups](https://specialolympicspa.org/get-involved/sports-sign-ups)

Sports Season Prep

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Important Winter Dates:

- [Winter Season Calendar](#)
- **December 18 – Key Deadline:**
 - Winter Season Eligibility - all athletes must have current medical on file to be eligible for competition
- Season Dates: December to March

Athlete Training Requirement

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- Coaches should begin training at least 10 weeks prior to the state culminating event.
 - Indoor Winter Games: 10 weeks out is December 22nd; knowing you will break for the holidays trainings should be set to begin no later than early to mid December
- Athletes must be trained according to the minimum standards acceptable, for at least eight (8) weeks in the appropriate sport, and must have several opportunities to compete during that period.

Athlete & Volunteer Eligibility

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Athlete Requirements: Medical on file WITH signature + expiration dates

- **Local Programs:** Athlete Medical under Certifications
- **Regions:** Athlete Registration Form & Health History under Certifications
- Valid for 3 years.
- Save attachments under "Attachments" within a person's profile vs. anywhere else in the profile.

Class A Volunteer Requirements: Class A Trainings + Background Check on file

- Background Results under Background Checks, Valid for 5 years.
- General Orientation under Training, Valid for life.
- Protective Behaviors, under Training, Valid for 3 years.
- Concussion Training, under Training, Valid for 3 years.

Unified Partners Eligibility

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- **NEW in 2023** – Unified Sports Partners do not need an athlete medicals.
- All Partners – Must have a VSys database record
- Ages 16 and up – must have General Orientation and Protective Behaviors Training
- Ages 18 and up - Must have General Orientation, Protective Behaviors and a Background check.

UCS: PIAA Medical

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A Unified Champion School athlete or Unified Partner may participate in a local program with their PIAA Medical. The participant must request a copy of the medical from their school.

The PIAA physical exam must be inputted into Vsys as an "athlete medical" and the medical form must be uploaded as an attachment.

UPDATE: The PIAA physical exam form is good for one year from the Dr's Signature date. If the date is 3/22/22 the exam expires on 3/22/23.

Attendance Tracker Updates

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Age Calculator – Winter is determined as of **10/15/2023**

Eligibility Tab: Deadline for all rostered individual to be eligible is **12/18/2023**

- Athlete Medical
- Volunteer: Background Check, Gen Orientation, Protective Behavior, Concussion Training

Sport Specific Rosters/Tabs:

- Team Sports MUST complete Competition tab indicating team each athlete is on or skills
- Team Rating Forms, must be completed by Dec 18 if submitting age exemptions OR by registration for the first competition

Missing volunteer/athlete

- Did they complete Sport Sign-up Form?
 - If Yes and you don't see them contact RSD

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

CONTACT YOUR REGIONAL SPORT DIRECTOR

Attendance Trackers

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Coach will receive tracker when they submit Site Registration Form

Site Attendance Tracker has 4-5 tabs: Directions, Attendance, Eligibility, Competition, Rating Form

- **Tab 1: Directions: How to complete the form**
- **Tab 2 Attendance:**
 - Lists all participants that have signed up
 - Includes phone, email, DOB and age
 - Attendance should be tracked after each practice
 - Interest in attending Sectionals & State Games will be used to advance for competitions
 - Data will be used to collect training numbers and ultimately future allocations

Attendance Trackers

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Tab 3: Eligibility – If participant is NOT eligible...they cannot participate

Athletes: Must have current medical

Volunteer: General Orientation, Concussion Protocol, Protective Behaviors, 18 and over current background check

Highlighted **RED** out of date

Highlighted **YELLOW** will expire prior to state competition

Updated weekly by SOPA from November 5 – December 18

Athletes and Volunteer CANNOT participate in trainings if they have not met all eligibility requirements - it is YOUR responsibility to track this.

IMPORTANT: Winter Deadline – December 18, 2023

Tab 4: Competition – sport specific

Required for Team Sports – identifies team participation or skills for each athlete and coach

Tab 5: Rating Form Tab (Floor Hockey/Floorball)

Required to be completed by Dec 18 if submitting Age Exemption OR by registration date for first competition

Qualifiers

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- **Bowling is the only winter sport that is a qualifier to Indoor Winter Games.**
 - **Qualifying events will be Regional Bowling Tournaments and the SOPA Bowling League.**
- Games Advancement slots per Sectional will be dependent on total number of slots at Indoor Winter Games and % of interest in advancing from each Regional event with a few additional selected from the SOPA Bowling League.

Allocations -

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- Bowling is the only winter sport providing allocations.
- Regional Tournaments will be allocating as necessary for their events, based on either previous year training numbers or current training season, if all training sites are up and running for the season.
- IWG allocations will be provided in early January once all Bowling Attendance Trackers have been populated with desire to advance to Regional/State competition.

SOPA Code of Conduct

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- All athletes and volunteers are expected to read, sign and follow the SOPA Code of Conduct.
- Coaches should review SOPA Code of Conduct during the first practice as a reminder for everyone during the season
- As a coach it is your responsibility to promote good sportsmanship. It is also important to know when to give an athlete a break if a situation is escalating.

Medication Reminders - All events

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- **FORMS:** Medication Assistance Best Practices, Winter 2023/24 Consent Form and Tracker - forms are located on SOPA website: <https://specialolympicspa.org/get-involved/resource-library>
- Coaches should be sharing this information with athletes, parents/guardians prior to all full day or overnight events. SOPA will no longer be emailing this information to all participants.
- Please ensure your athletes are completing the Medication Assistance Consent Form and your Class A volunteers traveling with the delegation are completing the Medication Assistance Tracker.
- Please reach out to chammell@specialolympicspa.org directly with any questions or concerns on the process.



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Snowshoeing UPDATES

SOPA Website - Sports Offered Page



- Links to all the sport pages
- [Sports Offered](#)
- [Seasonal Sign-up](#)
- Lots of great resources!

Winter Sports Sign-Ups!

We are gearing up for our **Winter season** and invite all athletes and volunteers to **SIGN UP TODAY!**

Whether you're a new or returning athlete or volunteer, [follow this link to sign up for Winter Sports!](#)

A graphic for the Winter Season 2023, featuring a blue snowflake icon with the year "2023" below it, and the text "Special Olympics Pennsylvania WINTER SEASON" in blue and red.

Winter Sports

- [Winter Season Rollout](#) >
- [Alpine Skiing](#) >
- [Bowling](#) >
- [Figure Skating](#) >
- [Floor Hockey/Floorball](#) >
- [Snowboarding](#) >
- [Snowshoeing](#) >
- [Speed Skating](#) >

SOI Sport Rules & Resources

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Special Olympics Resources

- Coaches Guide
- Fact Sheets
- Rules (2022)
- Rule Changes (2022)

Direct Links:

Snowshoeing Resources



RESOURCES

Participants in the 2022 World Winter Games will compete under the 2018 versions of the Sport-specific Rules.

[Coaching Guide 2021 \(Online\)](#)

[Coaching Guide 2021 \(PDF\)](#)

[Fact Sheet](#)

[Rules \(2022\)](#)

[Rules Changes \(2022\)](#)

[Rules \(2020\)](#)

Sport Management Team (SMT)

- Tom Mereen, Sport Director
- Purpose of SMT is to determine future direction of the sport, plan/execute competitions and train coaches and officials.
- We are looking for 1 representative from each Region to form this team. If you are interested, please contact Michelle Boone, mboone@specialolympicspa.org



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COACH – SEASON PLANNING

Athlete Performance Training Snapshot

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Interested Coaches

- Learn More by visiting the [APT webpage](#)
- Participation qualifies coaches for Bronze level certification

How to sign-up

- Go to your VSys portal and complete the Athlete Performance Training under "Training Schools, Webinars and More"
- Watch the video, take the quiz and then complete the registration form

Benefits of APT

- FREE to programs/teams
- Turn-key, easy to execute
- HQ will provide coaches and athletes with materials
- Provide health, fitness and wellness education to athletes and coaches



What is Athlete Performance Training (APT)?

- Designed to elevate the fitness levels of athletes and improve their sports outcomes, Athlete Performance Training consists of a combination of coach-facilitated sports practices and at-home fitness programs.
- During practices, coaches will apply an approach that includes education, exertion and evaluation.
 - **Education:** Time is taken during each sports practice to discuss physical activity, nutrition, and hydration as a team.
 - **Exertion:** A practice plan is followed that engages athletes in physical activity throughout the entire practice.
 - **Evaluation:** Athletes' health and fitness metrics are collected at the start and end of the season.
- At home, athletes and their families/caregivers are provided a fitness program to complement the in-person practices.



Key Aspects of APT:



- A minimum of 8 weeks of training are required to fully complete APT.
- Any size team and any sport can participate.
- Health metrics of athletes are collected and recorded electronically on a Google sheet provided to you by SOPA.
- Health metrics: Height, weight and blood pressure can be collected from athlete's previous doctor visits.
- Fitness metrics: Determined by coaches completing a modified Coopers Test at the start and end of training and recording results.





Registering for APT:

- Coaches interested should visit the Online Portal to complete the necessary online training.
- The training can be found under the “**Training Schools, Webinar and More**” tab, labeled as “**Athlete Performance Training.**” You will only be able to access the training if you’ve taken your other required trainings (Concussion Training, General Orientation and Protective Behaviors).
- You will need to complete a short quiz after the training
- Once video and quiz are completed you will be directed to the registration form to sign up your team and request materials
- You will be contacted by SOPA, after with additional information regarding mailings of materials as well as a link to the Athlete Performance Training Tracking.



To find more information on APT visit the SOPA website under **More Than Sports**

Why Participate in APT?



- SOPA athletes are at greater risk for being obese, more likely to suffer from long term health conditions, and are dying 20 years younger.
- By incorporating APT into training, you are providing tools for our athletes to improve to their health and fitness and lower their risk of these health disparities.
- APT will become the standard in trainings, our goal is that all athletes will have the opportunity to participate in Athlete Performance Training





Coaches Training and Progression Plan

By implementing Athlete Performance Training for a minimum of 8 weeks during training AND completing the "Athlete Performance Training Tracking" at the start and end of the season, you are eligible for the **Bronze Level** specifically the Athlete Performance Training component of the Coaches Training and Progression Plan.

Questions? Contact Healthy Communities
Coordinator, Charla Stein
cstein@specialolympicspa.org
610-630-9450 ext. 254

Be Prepared for the Season!

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- Get everyone eligible
- Understand and be aware of Air Quality levels
- Keep a pulse on illness/disease outbreaks within your community – remind athletes not to attend training if they are sick and to practice healthy habits and good hygiene.
- Know your facilities Emergency Action Plan and Evacuation route
- Updated yourself on sport rules and work with assistant coaches on a seasonal plan – identify who will manage each task during practice. Recruit additional assistance if needed.

Brand and Uniform Guidelines



- New Resource that include SO brand and uniform guidelines
- Includes mock-ups of sport specific uniforms

[SOPA Brand and Uniform Guidelines](#)

Snowshoeing Uniform

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Snowshoe

- Ski Jacket
- Ski Pants
- Gloves
- Head covering such as a beanie



Recommended Snowshoes



- Lightweight
- Easy to run in
- Affordable



• <https://crescentmoonsnowshoes.com/>

Attire

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- **Layer 1** (against your body):
 - Liner socks (thin polypropylene)
 - Long underwear (polypro, Lycra tights)
 - Polypropylene shirt (or some other wicking material)
- **Layer 2:**
 - Wool socks (or wool blend ski socks)
 - Polar fleece pants or long underwear
 - Polar fleece top or wool sweater
 - Lightweight gloves
- **Layer 3:**
 - Wind pants or lightweight ski pants
 - Lightweight jacket (windbreaker) or vest
 - Headband or hat
 - Leg/ankle Gaiters & Neck gaiter
 - Mittens or overmits

Attire



.NO COTTON



**.Cotton gets cold when it
gets wet!**

Attire



- Why Layers?
- Heat Issues
 - Heavy Jackets are needed while waiting to compete
 - Remove layers before competition to prevent Heat Illness and dehydration

Coaching Requirements



As of January 2021, Coach requirements for training and competition:

- **Team Sports:**
 - Must have at least one or more certified coach(s) per team
- **Individual Sports and Team Individual Skills:**
 - Must have at least one or more certified coach(s) per 25 athletes



Continuing Education Update

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- **Protective Behavior and Concussion Training** has been removed from the list of approved courses for Continuing Education and from the Continuing Education Request form.
- **Effective February 1, 2023, these two courses will not be accepted for continuing education**
- There are plenty of Continuing Education options available on the [SOPA website](#).



Coaching Practicum Hours

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- If a coach needs to complete 10 required practicum hours from sport training courses, that were taken in 2019, 2020, 2021 they have until December 2023 to submit these hours.
- **Hours must be submitted on their VSys Portal.**

Expired Sport Certifications

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- If your sport certification expired between 2020 and 2022 you have until December of 2023 to complete your continuing education course to update your certifications.
- **This extension expires on December 31, 2023.**
- On January 1, 2024, you will need to retake the Sport that has not been updated.



Volunteer UPDATES



Volunteer Q & A

What is the minimum age for a Head Coach? **18**

What is the youngest age of a Unified Partner? **8**

What age do you need a Young athlete chaperone for? **Overnight events for 8 & 9 year olds**

Can my assistant coach be 14? **Training yes; Events No**

- **1-day events - 16**
- **Overnight events - 18**

Volunteer Position Requirements



Class B

Volunteer Classifications	VSys, Trainings & Clearances→	Completed Volunteer Application → VSys Record	Background Clearance to include PA Disclosure Statement	Protective Behaviors	General Orientation	Concussion Training	Sport Certification
	Position & Age (If applicable) ↓						(Note: 14 & over may attend Training Schools)
Class B	Medical Volunteer - Student	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Class B	General/Local Program/Team Volunteer - Volunteer are outside the 1:4 ratio with no chaperoning responsibilities 15 yrs. old and younger	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Class B	One Day Volunteer	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Class B	Bus Driver - Non-registered volunteer	No	No	No	No	No	No
Class B	Equestrian Horse Handler 14 and older – one day events	Yes	No	No	No	No	No

Last updated: July 2022

Volunteer Position Requirements



SPECIAL OLYMPICS PENNSYLVANIA VOLUNTEER POSITION REQUIREMENTS							
Volunteer Classifications	VSys, Trainings & Clearances→	Completed Volunteer Application → VSys Record	Background Clearance to include PA Disclosure Statement	Protective Behaviors	General Orientation	Concussion Training	Sport Certification
	Position & Age (If applicable) ↓						(Note: 14 and over may attend Training Schools)
Class A	HOD - 18 yrs. old or older	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Class A	Head Coach - 18 yrs. old or older	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Class A	Assistant Coach - 16 to 17 yrs. old – one day events	Yes	Yes for 18 and over	Yes for 16 and over	Yes for 16 and over	Yes for 16 and over	No
	18 yrs. old or older – overnight events						
Class A	Athlete as Coach - 16 to 17 yrs. old – one day events	Yes	Yes for 18 and over	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	18 yrs. old or older – overnight events						
Class A	Unified Partner - 8 yrs. old or older	Yes	Yes for 18 and over	Yes for 16 and over	Yes for 16 and over	Yes for 16 and over	No
Class A	1:1- Chaperone Capacity Only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No but recommended	No
	Volunteer/Athlete are above the 1:4 ratio						
Class A	Group Home Chaperone - Chaperone capacity only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No but recommended	No
	Volunteer/Athlete are above the 1:4 ratio						
Class A	Equestrian Side Walker - 18 yrs. old or older	Yes	Yes for 18 and over	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Class A	Equestrian Horse Handler	Yes	Yes for 18 and over	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	14 to 17 yrs. old – one day events						
	18 yrs. old or older – overnight events						
Class A	Health and Fitness Coordinator - 18 yrs. old or older	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Class A	Healthy Athlete Clinical Director	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Class A	Delegation Volunteer - Volunteer are outside the 1:4 ratio with no chaperoning responsibilities	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes for 16 and over	No but recommended	No
Class A	Young Athlete Chaperone - Overnight chaperone for athletes ages 8 and 9 yrs. old	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Class A	Medical Volunteer - Professional	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No



2024 STATE COMPETITION

Winter Games:

Tuesday February 13 - Thursday February 15, 2024

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Seven Springs Mountain Resort: Seven Springs, PA

- [2024 State Competition & Important Dates](#)
- Event Reg Info shared December 19th
- LOI due January 4th
- Final Allocations sent January 5th
- Online Vsys Roster due January 8th
- Registration due January 18th
- Competition Eligibility Deadline February 2nd
- Scratch/Activation due February 5th



Winter Games – Arrival/Departure

- Arrival
- Delegation Registration, Tuesday, February 13, 3- 3:50 pm Stag Pass
- Departure
- 3:30 pm, Thursday, February 15
- Housing
- Housing information will be shared with Event Registration.
- All delegations will be housed Tuesday and Wednesday evenings; option for an additional night of housing will be available to a select few programs who are traveling a significant distance.
- Tentative Schedule will be shared 8 weeks prior to Winter Games with Event Registration Information.

USA Games



- 2026 USA Games
 - June 20-26
 - University of Minnesota
 - 2024 events will be qualifiers for USA Games, SOPA will not be allocated specific slots until late 2024 – floor hockey/floorball has not historically been offered as part of USA Games



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USA GAMES
MINNESOTA 2026

THANK YOU

