



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
USA GAMES
MINNESOTA 2026

Special Olympics
West Virginia



MEMORANDUM

TO: Local County Directors
FROM: Wendy Miller
DATE: January 14, 2025
RE: 2026 Special Olympics USA Games Team West Virginia Quota & Selection Process

2026 Special Olympics USA National Games

Team West Virginia will be comprised of **35 total delegates** from across the state who will represent Special Olympics West Virginia at the *2026 Special Olympics USA Games in Minnesota*.

Special Olympics West Virginia will have participants from 6 different sports –athletics, bocce, bowling, cornhole, golf and swimming (aquatics), as well as representatives from an active Unified Champion School in attendance.

A complete list of the SOWV quota breakdown is included in this memo.

The 2026 SO USA Games will take place June 20-26, in some of the best sports facilities in the Twin Cities area – including the renowned University of Minnesota, National Sports Center and more.

The 2026 Special Olympics USA Games will feature 3,000+ athletes & unified partners, 1,500 coaches, 10,000 volunteers, and 125,000 fans, all of whom will unite in the Minneapolis area and participate in one of the country's most cherished sporting events.

Athletes will compete in 16 Olympic-type team and individual sports. The Games will promote the ideals of acceptance and inclusion through sport and will showcase the athleticism and abilities of people with intellectual disabilities, while highlighting Special Olympics' work in sport, education, health and community-building.

Learn more about the [2026 Special Olympics USA Games](#)

Expenses

Special Olympics West Virginia will cover the costs for travel, uniforms and all expenses related to the 2026 USA Games Team West Virginia experience.

Local county programs that have athletes, partners, and/or coaches selected from their community will share a minimal cost and will be expected to help fundraise for Team West Virginia through very specific fundraising initiatives. More details will be shared once the team is selected later in the 2025 calendar year.

NOTE: Family members wishing to travel to Minneapolis to support athletes will not be part of the delegation and will be expected to cover ALL of their own expenses. Information about the families' program (credentials, access to preferred housing, tickets to ceremonies, etc.) will be shared to those with athletes and unified partners selected.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
USA GAMES
MINNESOTA 2026

Special Olympics
West Virginia



Advancement to 2026 Special Olympics USA Games Process – Athletes & Partners

- SOWV athletes and unified partners **will first be eligible for consideration** for SO USA Games advancement by receiving a gold medal* (in SO Team West Virginia quota selected events) at the highest level SOWV competitions held in designated competitions* per the guidelines in the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules, Article I, Section 13 – Criteria for Advancement. The following competitions will be used to determine those eligible for consideration:
 - 2024 State Golf Championship
 - 2024 SOWV Summer Games
 - 2024 State Bowling Championship

**In a few cases, athletes who earned a place lower than gold may also be included on the list for consideration if participant numbers are very small. In addition, gold medal winners from 2023 State Games may also be considered to ensure that we have enough candidates in the drawing after the screening process. Gold medalists from 2024 will still take priority should they clear the screening process.*

- Local County Directors will review and inform SOWV of any concerns and provide endorsement or recommendation of removal from consideration.
- Athletes will be considered for the drawing in all sports/events in which they have qualified to be eligible (occasionally athletes will earn a gold in multiple sports that have quota slots). However, each athlete will only be able to be selected in one sport for USA Games. In the highly unlikely case that an athlete be selected in more than one sport, he/she would be asked to choose one sport.
- Applicants will be screened for appropriateness to travel, behavior, ability to be away from home for over a week, etc... (published criteria standards listed on application).
- **Applications are due no later than February 28, 2025. NO LATE ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

Athlete/Unified Partner Selection Criteria

In order for athletes/partners and coaches to be eligible for selection to Special Olympics Team West Virginia, they must be able to meet all of the criteria listed:

- Athletes/Unified Partners must be at least 16 years of age.
- Athletes/Unified Partners should have participated in their sport during the 2023-2024 sports seasons.
- Each athlete selected must attend all training sessions as outlined by SOWV. They may include weekend training camps that will require the athlete/partner to be away from home and work. Transportation concerns will need to be worked out in advance.
- Athletes/Unified Partners must be able to obtain a physical on a USA Games medical.
- Athletes/Unified Partners must adhere to the Special Olympics WV Code of Conduct.
- Athletes/Unified Partners selected must also demonstrate good sportsmanship and the ability to function well as part of a team.
- Athletes/Unified Partners must not only be dedicated to their sport, but must also have the ability to commit extra time to training, travel to training, and be involved in other activities as determined by SOWV or their USA Games coach, which may not be their local county coach.
- Athletes must be able to independently manage themselves in daily living activities and life skills, including but not limited to toileting, showering, personal hygiene, eating, etc.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
USA GAMES
MINNESOTA 2026

Special Olympics
West Virginia



- Athletes must be able to take care of themselves during the course of the Games with minimal contact from family members.
- Athletes must be able to handle independently and/or under Team West Virginia supervision, lengthy travel days (air and/or vehicle travel).
- Athletes must be able to be out of state, away from families and jobs for approximately a one-week period to travel to and from, and attend the Games.
- Athletes and partners selected to Team West Virginia must commit to a Team WV training program that will not only include sport training, but a commitment to health and fitness leading up to the Games.
- An athlete/partner may be removed from the Delegation, at any time, for failure to adhere to the principles, or fulfill the responsibilities of the criteria set forth by Special Olympics West Virginia. An athlete/partner may also be removed for health and safety issues.
- All athletes selected to Team West Virginia will be under the direction of a Team WV coach who will supervise and assist the athletes in taking their medications, including self-medicating athletes.

Advancement to 2026 Special Olympics USA Games Process – Coaches

- Coaches will apply independent of their athletes and may be selected even if none of their local program athletes are selected by published due dates. Coaches are not assured a selection to Team West Virginia if one or more of their athletes are selected.
- **Applications are due no later than February 28, 2025. NO LATE ENTRIES will be accepted.**
- **Coaches must be a Level 2 – Advanced Certified Coach in order to be considered for USA and/or World Games selection.**
- A selection committee of staff and volunteers may conduct interviews to select all 2026 Team West Virginia coaches. Applicants will be screened for appropriateness to travel, ability to be away from home for over a week, etc...

Coach Selection Criteria

In order for coaches to be eligible for selection to Special Olympics Team West Virginia, they must be able to meet all of the criteria listed:

- Coaches should be 21 years or older by June 19, 2026.
- Coaches must also have a minimum of 2 years' experience coaching Special Olympics athletes.
- Must follow all of Special Olympics West Virginia Volunteer policies for Class A volunteers.
- Must be or become an Advanced Certified Coach for your specific sport by April 1, 2025.
- Must abide by Special Olympics West Virginia Code of Conduct.
- Must be willing and able to serve as both a sport specific coach and an athlete chaperone for all Team West Virginia activities leading up to, and during the Games. This includes 24 hour/day supervision of athletes during Games times and at all training camps/practices.
- Coaches must be well educated in coaching, sportsmanship, dedication to quality training, understand the rules of the sport and have the ability to function as a part of a team.
- Must be able to distribute prescribed medications to athletes.
- Must be willing to commit to maintaining ongoing contact with assigned athletes, their family/guardians, and the athlete's local county director/coach.
- Must be willing to organize practice sessions throughout the year with the selected athletes to ensure they are prepared for competition at the 2026 USA Games.
- Must work in conjunction with SOWV staff leading up to and during the games.



Special Olympics
West Virginia



- Must attend any Team West Virginia meetings prior to and during the games.
- Must show a commitment to participating and leading year-round health and fitness programs not only with the athletes associated with Team West Virginia, but your home delegation.
- Must be able to be out of state, away from their families and jobs, for approximately a one-week period to travel to and from, and attend the Games.
- Must be able to conduct practice sessions with selected athletes at a minimum of one time per week for at least 8 weeks leading up to the Games.

It is important to understand the commitment necessary to be part of the coaching team for Team West Virginia. Coaches serve as additional chaperones and logistic assistants for the entire delegation, and may be needed at the event to take athletes to Healthy Athletes, assist with athletes that may need additional attention, etc. even if they are not an athlete in your sport.

It is also important to note that a great deal of walking will be expected of all coaches and athletes at the Games as the Games, Opening Ceremonies and housing will be held at several separate venues.

It is the expectation that all members of Team West Virginia be able to meet all of the above criteria.

If interested in being considered for Team West Virginia, applicable athletes, Unified partners, coaches and current members of a SOWV Unified Champion School should complete the appropriate application by the deadline.

Again - late submissions will not be accepted.

Thank you!

Wendy Miller
Director, Sports & Training
Special Olympics West Virginia



2026 Special Olympics USA Games - TEAM WEST VIRGINIA QUOTA

21 athletes, 1 unified partner, 6 coaches, 1 Team Doctor, 3 UCS, 3 staff = 35 delegates

**Coach and Staff gender balance for Team West Virginia will be a factor in selection for those positions*

Below is the quota allotment for Special Olympics West Virginia in the following 6 sports (+ UCS leadership):

Summer

Sport: **Athletics** (4 athletes and 1 coach) – athletes earning gold in INDIVIDUAL EVENTS listed below advance to list
Quota: 2 females – category 2 (100m run, 200m run, 400m run, Shotput, Long Jump) – *see ATHLETICS Sport Performance Standards chart*
 2 males – category 2 (100m run, 200m run, 400m run, Shotput, Long Jump) – *see ATHLETICS Sport Performance Standards chart*
 1 male or female coach will be selected independent of athletics athletes*

Sport: **Bocce** (4 athletes and 1 coach) – will be selected as singles, doubles & team
Quota: 2 females
 2 males
 1 male or female coach will be selected independent of bocce players*

Sport: **Cornhole** (4 athletes and 1 coach) – will be selected as singles, doubles & team
Quota: 2 females
 2 males
 1 male or female coach will be selected independent of cornhole players*

Sport: **Golf** (3 athletes & 1 unified partner and 1 coach) – will be selected in individual skills and Alternate Shot 9 or 18 Hole
Quota: 2 male athletes – individual skills
 1 male athlete & 1 male unified partner – Unified Alternate Shot 9 or 18 hole (see performance standards chart)
 1 male coach will be selected independent of golfers

Sport: **Swimming (Aquatics)** (2 athletes and 1 coach) athletes earning gold in INDIVIDUAL EVENTS listed below advance to list
Quota: 2 males – *see SWIMMING Sport Performance Standards chart*
 1 male coach will be selected independent of swimmers*

Sport: **Bowling** (8 total athletes and 2 coaches) – bowling singles and team

Fall

Quota: 2 female bowlers – minimum participation standard = average of 67 or above
 2 male bowlers – minimum participation standard = average of 86 or above
 1 male or female coach will be selected independent of bowlers*

Activity: **Unified Champion Schools (UCS) Youth Leadership (1 athlete, 1 Unified partner, 1 mentor) ****

Other

Quota: 1 athlete – male or female
 1 Unified partner – male or female
 1 adult chaperone – male or female
 ** *Same gender is highly recommended.*



2026 Special Olympics USA Games Sport Performance Standards

In select sports, minimum participation standards have been created to ensure meaningful competition and proper event selection for athletes at the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games. Please see list below. Special Olympics West Virginia will use these as guidelines when considering selection of athletes to fill available quota slots.

ATHLETICS SPORT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

ATHLETICS List of Events & Standards		
	Male	Female
Event	Performance Standard	Performance Standard
50m Run	≥ 12.00	≥ 13.00
100m Walk	≤ 46.16	≤ 57.98
400m Walk	≤ 03:59.73	≤ 04:23.81
100m Run*	≤ 21.67	≤ 26.56
200m Run	≤ 44.03	≤ 52.75
400m Run	≤ 01:39.05	≤ 02:01.37
800m Run	≤ 04:02.49	≤ 05:10.89
1500m Run	≤ 08:31.48	≤ 10:46.44
3000m Run	≤ 17:58.94	≤ 24:02.95
5000m Run	≤ 29:36.25	≤ 43:57.08
Long Jump	≥ 2.72m	≥ 1.95m
Mini Jav	≥ 15.02m	≥ 11.10m
Shot Put	≥ 6.62m	≥ 4.61m
Relays	N/A	N/A

BOWLING SPORT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Event	Male – Minimum Participation Standard	Female – Minimum Participation Standard
Singles	86 per game average	67 per game average

GOLF

Athletes & Unified partners are restricted to participation within one level.

- Golfers must not exceed the maximum entry averages listed below.
 - o **Level 2 – 9-hole average of ≤ 70**
 - o **Level 3 – 18-hole average of ≤ 120**
 - o Scores must come from the most recent 6 scorecard average.
 - o **Golfers shooting above the max score over all 3 rounds will receive a participation ribbon**



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
USA GAMES
MINNESOTA 2026

Special Olympics
West Virginia



SWIMMING (AQUATICS) SPORT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

SWIMMING List of Events & Standards		
	Male	Female
Event	Performance Standard	Performance Standard
25 Free	≤ 28.79	≤ 31.79
25 Back	≤ 31.16	≤ 36.32
50 Free*	≤ 47.16	≤ 59.54
50 Back	≤ 01:02.22	≤ 01:15.56
50 Fly	≤ 59.03	≤ 01:18.79
50 Breast	≤ 01:10.34	≤ 01:25.22
100 Free	≤ 01:41.45	≤ 02:09.25
100 Back	≤ 02:13.72	≤ 02:39.37
100 Fly	≤ 02:04.57	≤ 02:45.97
100 Breast	≤ 02:14.57	≤ 02:59.36
100 IM	≤ 02:18.87	≤ 02:38.84
200 Free	≤ 3:58.67	≤ 04:59.57
200 IM	≤ 04:37.83	≤ 06:34.17
400/500 Free	≤ 09:46.79	≤ 12:45.39