

(2) Watch for “Red Flag” Behaviors:

While we cannot make a generalization that will address every possible scenario, there are certain behaviors that should raise a red flag.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Inappropriate gifts, trips, outings, or other gestures of affection from a volunteer;
- Invitations for sleepovers at a volunteer’s house;
- Invitations for social events at a volunteer’s house that do not include, or specifically exclude, parents or caregivers;
- Excessive displays of interest in a particular athlete or group of athletes; and
- A Volunteer’s interest in an athlete outside the normal scope of a Special Olympics activity.

Note: Each situation is different, so it is important for parents/guardians to evaluate the proposed activity on a case-by-case basis, which may include a call to your local Special Olympics office to confirm the validity of the activity, and determine whether it is appropriate for the athlete.

(3) Report Suspicious Behavior

See “What if I have a Concern” section in this brochure.

How do I Identify a Sexual Predator?

Identifying a sexual predator is very difficult and therefore, parents/guardians should be extremely cautious of those “red flag” activities, behaviors and characteristics outlined in this brochure.

How do I Identify a Sexual Predator?

Special Olympics has undertaken steps to check the backgrounds of certain volunteers and to educate registered volunteers, staff and parents/caregivers of “red flag” behaviors, but everyone should be on the lookout for inappropriate behavior.

Special Olympics fosters friendships and creates opportunities for athletes to become involved in activities that may extend outside of Special Olympics. It is important for parents and caregivers to be aware of two important facts:

(1) Only activities organized, conducted and sponsored by Special Olympics qualify as official Special Olympics activities (not those activities outside of Special Olympics that may result from friendships made through Special Olympics).

(2) Sexual predators often target vulnerable populations, can come from any background, can be male or female, are often generally “likeable” with warm personalities, and may have limited relationships with other adults. In other words, pay attention and notify Special Olympics if you think a behavior is a “red flag” or inappropriate because there is no one way to identify a person with bad intentions.

What if I have a Concern?

If you believe anyone involved with Special Olympics is engaging in activities that do not fit within the expected scope of Special Olympics, contact Special Olympics Michigan at (800) 644-6404 to discuss the situation.

If you believe that a Special Olympics athlete has been abused, contact law enforcement as law enforcement has the expertise to investigate such allegations.

**Special
Olympics
Michigan**



**A Guide for Parents and
Care Providers to Help Keep
Our Athletes Safe**

Quick Reference Brochure

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

**SPECIAL OLYMPICS MICHIGAN
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Here at Special Olympics, we believe that EVERYONE, including staff, volunteers, parents, caregivers and coaches has a role to play in ensuring the safety of Special Olympics athletes. We take this responsibility seriously and have implemented a number of steps to help make participating in Special Olympics not only rewarding, but also safe.

This quick reference brochure is just that, a brochure intended to be supplemented by the detailed Guide for Parents and Caregivers to Keep our Athletes Safe, which is available from your Special Olympics Program. We strongly encourage parents and caregivers to review the Guide for Parents and Caregivers in addition to this brochure for more detailed information. Parents and caregivers are also encouraged to discuss the content of this guide with their athletes to help their athletes distinguish appropriate behavior from inappropriate behavior.

We know that we cannot safeguard our athletes without YOUR help! We need the involvement of others, including parents and caregivers in order to be successful.

What is Special Olympics Doing?

Volunteer Screening: Registered Volunteers who meet certain criteria, including having close contact with athletes, are screened using a national criminal background check vendor.

Protective Behaviors Training: Registered Volunteers who have close contact with Special Olympics athletes are required to complete the Protective Behaviors training, which highlights possible signs of physical, sexual and emotional abuse so that all volunteers are active in helping us achieve our ultimate goal of protecting Special Olympics athletes from harm or abuse.

Dating Policy: Special Olympics prohibits any staff member or volunteer (excluding spouses of Special Olympics athletes and Special Olympics athletes who are “day of event” volunteers) from dating or having a sexual relationship with any Special Olympics athlete.

Please see the detailed Guide for Parents and Caregivers to Keep Our Athletes Safe for additional polices Special Olympics Michigan has in place for athlete safety.

How Can I Help?

(1) Know what to expect from Special Olympics. The following is a very brief overview of some of the types of official activities that are available to Special Olympics athletes (please consult your local Special Olympics Program for a full list):

Local Level Team Practices & Competitions:

These practices and competitions are organized by your local Special Olympics Program or coach (individual one-on-one practices fall outside the normal scope of Special Olympics activities). Athletes are expected to arrive at the practice location at the appointed practice time and leave immediately following the conclusion of the practice, as volunteers/coaches are only present during the appointed practice times.

State/National/Regional/World Games: Larger events organized by your Special Olympics Program State office or Special Olympics, Inc. may require travel and/or an overnight stay(s). Parents and caregivers should request details regarding travel and housing accommodations, when applicable, and address any concerns prior to the event with their local Program office.

Healthy Athletes®: Special Olympics athletes receive a variety of health screenings and services in a series of clinics conducted in a welcoming,

fun environment. Parents/caregivers/athletes will be required to consent to such screening, if interested.

Unified Sports®: This initiative combines approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes and athletes without intellectual disabilities (Partners) on sports teams for training and competition. One outcome of Unified Sports activities may be new friendships that extend beyond official Special Olympics activities. Parents and caregivers should use their own discretion in determining an appropriate friendship level outside of official Special Olympics activities.

Unified Champion Schools: This initiative is an education-based project that uses sports and education programs to activate young people to develop school communities where all youth are agents of change; fostering respect, dignity and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities. Parents and caregivers should use their own discretion in determining an appropriate level of participation/friendships outside of official Special Olympics activities.

Athlete Leadership Programs: These programs allow athletes to explore opportunities for participation in various leadership community roles. Parents and caregivers should use their own discretion in determining appropriate community roles/activities outside of official Special Olympics activities.

Fundraising Activities and Events: It is difficult to define “typical” fundraising involvement that parents or care providers should anticipate. It is not a requirement of Special Olympics that athletes participate in fundraising, and athletes/parents/care givers must use their own discretion in determining if and how an athlete decides to become involved in these efforts or events.