



WHAT EVERY VOLUNTEER SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SPECIAL OLYMPICS MICHIGAN

Every volunteer is a potential spokesperson for Special Olympics Michigan. Undoubtedly you will share your experiences with friends and family. At Special Olympics events, tournaments and games, you may be approached by news reporters. Become familiar with the following information so you will speak and act with knowledge and understanding of our program.

- Treat athletes at the finish of competition with respect and dignity. “Hugging” athletes is not always appropriate. Greet older athletes with a handshake and/or verbal “nice job!” or other congratulatory remark. Always stand at least 10 meters behind the finish line so you do not impede the finish of the race.
- Special Olympics is a **YEAR ROUND PROGRAM**, not an annual event. Know what the particular event for which you are volunteering is only one in a year round training and competition calendar.
- Special Olympics is for **ADULTS and CHILDREN**. The average age of a Special Olympics Athlete in Michigan is 27. **DO NOT** refer to Special Olympics athletes as kids. Call them “athletes” or “Special Olympics athletes” or “participants”.
- Special Olympics is for persons that have an **INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY**. Some Special Olympics athletes also may have physical disabilities, but the criterion for participation is an intellectual disability.
- Do not speak to Special Olympics athletes with any degree of pity. Special Olympics should be publicized as a serious sports program which challenges those with an intellectual disability. You need only attend on Special Olympics event to know that these athletes are quite capable.
- Special Olympics Michigan operates **STATEWIDE**. The State Office, located in Mount Pleasant, oversees the operation of 36 area programs throughout the state and coordinates state level competition, training, fund raising, and public education.
- Special Olympics Michigan receives no state or federal money, or funding from the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation. It relies on the generosity of individuals, organizations, and businesses.
- Special events are offered at most area, regional, and state events. These are recreational in nature, not competitive. Do not refer to activities like broomball, tug-of-war, tobogganing, etc. as competitive events.
- Special Olympics Michigan believes that everyone has a role to play in ensuring the safety of Special Olympics athletes. As a volunteer, you are a mandated reporter, meaning you are required to report any suspected abuse or neglect within 24 hrs. This can be reported to a Special Olympics Michigan staff member, tournament director, event director, police, or to the Department of Health and Human Services.