



## General Rules Amendment 2012

### Introduction

All governing documents require review and updating from time to time. The last amendment to the Special Olympics Official General Rules was in 2004, with the change in terminology from “mental retardation” to “intellectual disabilities.” Before that, there was a minor amendment in 2003, and a major amendment in 1997. The Special Olympics Movement has grown since then and become a more global organization. The General Rules 2012 Amendment reflects our expansion and broader reach. The Amendment was agreed as part of a collaborative process. Special Olympics Headquarters (“SOI”) received proposals over a 5-year period from Regional Leadership Councils, the Sports Rules Advisory Committee, other Board Committees and staff members.

SOI created a working group with representatives from each region that met every week from November 2010 to March 2011. The working group prepared recommendations to the CEO and the amendment was ratified by the Board of Special Olympics in February 2012. What follows is a summary of the key changes that make up the 2012 Amendment.

### Summary of 2012 Amendment

- **Preamble:** A new preamble has been added to introduce the fundamental purpose of Special Olympics, guiding principles and key relationships we have with partners such as the IOC and Sports Federations.
- **Structure:** The Special Olympics Official General Rules have been reorganized to mirror the Special Olympics 2011-2015 Strategic Plan Framework as follows:

Content	Former Article Number	New Article Number
Mission, Goal & Founding Principles	Article 1	Article 1
Definitions	Article 2	Article 10
SOI's Governance of Special Olympics	Article 3	Article 4
Governance and Operation of Accredited Programs	Article 4	Article 5
Accreditation of Programs	Article 5	Article 6
Special Olympics Athletes	Article 6	Article 2
Sports Training and Competition	Article 7	Article 3
Fundraising & Development	Article 8	Article 7
Financial arrangements, Fiscal accountability, Insurance	Article 9	Article 8
Interpretation of the General Rules	Article 10	Article 9



- **US-specific Rules.** Rules specific to United States' Accredited Programs are now included in a supplement to the General Rules, to ensure that the General Rules are appropriate for a global movement. The descriptive "National" has therefore been removed, and replaced with the terms "Accredited Program" or "Program" so that there is no longer a distinction made between US State Programs and Country Programs in the Rules.
- **Official Sports:** 'Games' refers to a competition with three (3) or more Official sports.
- **Regional Advisory Councils:** Now called Regional Leadership Councils, with the following language added:
  - Each RLC shall be responsible for... Strategic Growth plans for its region;
  - Persons elected to membership on an RLC shall meet the following criteria: Be an Executive/Program Director, or member of a Board of Directors/Program Committee, of an Accredited Program;
  - SOI, in consultation with the RLCs, may periodically authorize the formation of one or more Sub-Regional Leadership Councils ("**SRLC's**") to operate within a Sub-Region
- **Endowment Funds:** SOI recognizes the potential value of endowment funds and Programs may set up endowment funds, the creation and approval of which are subject to SOI approval.
- **Prohibition and Display of National Flags:** To emphasize the prohibition previously contained in the rules, the amendment to this section includes provision that no national flags shall be displayed and no national anthems shall be sung or otherwise performed by any athletes, coaches, or other members of any Accredited Program's Official Delegation at any World, Regional or Multi-Program Games event. A GOC may, however, display the flags of those nations competing in World or Regional Games and the flag of the host nation at opening, closing and award ceremonies and Games venues.
- **Prohibition of Face Painting:** Special Olympics Athletes, coaches and volunteers shall not paint their faces during competitions, Games, opening and closing ceremonies, awards venues or victory banquets. This prohibition now includes a prohibition against a display of commercial messages and the display of national flags painted on the face.
- **Clowns:** This is a new provision added to ensure that the dignity of Special Olympics competition is maintained. SOI, a GOC, or an Accredited Program shall ensure that clowns shall be restricted to Olympic town entertainment events and are prohibited from appearing at or participating in competitions, Games, opening and closing ceremonies, award venues, sports venues or victory banquets.



- **Mascots:** This provision is also new: SOI, a GOC, or an Accredited Program shall ensure that mascots shall observe the dignity of certain events during competitions and Games, including the reciting of the oaths, the raising of the flags, and the lighting of the cauldron at Games Opening and Closing Ceremonies. Mascots shall not participate in award ceremonies other than to congratulate athletes following the presentation of awards.
- **Sub-Programs:** This provision fills a gap not previously covered in the General Rules: If a Program loses its accreditation, the accreditation of any Sub-Program accredited by the Program will revert to the authority of SOI or its designated body. SOI will have the authority to cancel, renew, or extend the accreditation of any Sub-Program until such time as a new Program is accredited and the authority to accredit Sub-Programs is reinstated to the Accredited Program.
- **Final Notice of Revocation:** To ensure neutrality in proceedings to revoke accreditation in a case in which SOI has found grounds for revocation, SOI will consult with someone designated by the relevant Regional Leadership Council who does not have an interest in the revocation proceedings.
- **Young Athletes Program:** The Young Athletes program is now specifically highlighted in the eligibility clause.
- **Eligibility:** Specific reference to an individual's "level or degree" of disability has been deleted.
- **Classification of Special Olympics Sports:** The sports in which Special Olympics athletes are given the opportunity to train and compete are now divided into three general classes, consisting of the Official Sports, the Recognized Sports, and locally popular sports as defined in the Sports Rules.
- **Opportunities to Participate:** Accredited Programs shall offer training and competition opportunities for athletes of all levels of ability. The amendment now clarifies that Games and Tournaments may be structured to cater for only one level of competition.
- **Digital Fund-Raising:** The Fund-Raising Article has been updated to reflect technological developments over the years since the last General Rules amendment. In order to promote uniform standards for all digital fund-raising conducted in the name or for the benefit of Special Olympics, SOI shall provide written guidelines for all Accredited Programs and GOCs concerning the circumstances under which any Accredited Program or GOC may engage in digital fund-raising.
- **Use of Assets:** Accredited Programs and GOCs are prohibited from using any Accredited Program assets or GOC assets, including any funds raised in the name of or for the benefit of Special Olympics, for funding participation in programs or competitions not sanctioned by Special Olympics.



- **Annual Plans:** A new provision reflects the importance of aligning Accredited Programs with the Movement's Strategic Plan. Accredited Programs shall endeavor to develop multi-year plans aligned with SOI's strategic plans and priorities and prepare a written operational plan for each fiscal year (the "**Annual Plan**"), setting forth comprehensive goals for the Accredited Program's sports, programmatic, administrative and fund-raising activities.

A detailed description of the Amendment can be accessed at: [resources.specialolympics.org](https://resources.specialolympics.org)

Queries should be directed to SOI's Chief Legal Officer, Ms. Angela Ciccolo.