SPECIAL OLYMPICS VIRTUAL GAMES RESOURCES

Overview: There are high-quality Virtual Sport, Games, and Fitness activations being implemented by many Programs across the Special Olympics movement. Special Olympics is joined by many other sport organizations that have introduced similar initiatives with elements that may be of interest to athletes, coaches, and partners. SOI Sport and Competition are in the process of collecting information from the Regions, as well as interviewing select Programs with virtual events already underway.

The best source of information, including tips, techniques, and overall insights is directly from your colleagues at Programs that are currently hosting or planning virtual events. For additional direction, the Regions have submitted Program Virtual Games planning materials that are located here and will be updated on a regular basis by SOI Sport and Competition.

In these materials you will see a wide range of activities, formats, and interpretations of "virtual." We encourage you to assess what is a good fit for your athletes, Program, and community as this will vary due to a range of factors.

Topline Considerations:

- Involve your athlete leaders in the development of the event and offer roles in running the event.

- Leverage existing capabilities, infrastructure, and resources.

- Use proven digital channels/systems that athletes, coaches, and staff are familiar with using.

- Keep the sport and competition program simple but create opportunities for every ability level.

- Provide instructions and information in visual formats, preferably video.

- Consider a format that features an ongoing leaderboard tracking progress, rather than a set event.

- Maximize the opportunity for athletes to participate by creating easy access and limiting resources required.

- Consider a flexible registration process that allows athletes to enter at any point of the event.

- Consider allowing additional virtual participants to register (families, sponsors, media, etc.) but not win.

- Consider LETR or other fundraising elements that can be adapted to a virtual environment.

- We encourage the use of the Delegation Management system, use your subprogram structure with HODs, coaches to host webinar(s), and register athletes.

- Consider the differences between virtual and a live events. This may include sport fitness training activities and individual skills rather than sport competition.

- Focus on celebrating athletes achieving their personal bests, such as improved scores, number of entries, training hours, etc., and recognize these bests.

- Ensure all privacy and security protocols are in place, especially if using new technology, including software.

- Conduct a debrief and evaluation of the event that includes all stakeholders.

- Utilize the content created for future use outside of the Virtual Games (e.g. fitness content)

- Consider applications for this concept post-pandemic. For instance:
    o An annual event in a modified format.
    o A virtual component for your National Games (e.g. athletes unable to attend due to costs or distance can, alternatively, participate in a bowling competition in their Region that is virtually connected to the National Games.).

Virtual Games and Training represent an opportunity for athletes to stay connected to their fellow competitors and coaches while motivating them to continue to train, improve their fitness, and stay healthy in this current environment. Embrace sustainable innovations and culture changes that will continue to positively impact the Special Olympics sport experience and overall global movement.

Please let us know what support SOI can provide and continue to share your best practices and tips with us, so we can learn from each other. Please contact Lou Lauria, Chief of Sport and Competition at llauria@specialolympics.org.