



"This policy and procedure replaces and supersedes any prior policy and procedures on this subject matter including the most recent version of this policy from 2010."

While Special Olympics is not a member of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), we do have a strict anti-doping policy focused on athlete safeguarding and participant education.

Background

For more than 50 years, Special Olympics has been committed to the highest ideals of sport, providing year-round sports training and athletic competition for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Training and competition opportunities are provided free of charge to eligible athletes through the generosity of charitable supporters, volunteers and limited paid staff. United in its commitment to inclusion, respect and dignity, Special Olympics is not exclusively focused on elite competition opportunities, but provides competition at all levels of ability, consistent with a deep respect for fair play.

Divisioning

In the spirit of giving people of all abilities equal opportunities to succeed, Special Olympics uses a process called competitive divisioning which matches athletes of similar ability and skill level into divisions. This eliminates the incentive for the use of performance enhancing drugs, as an athlete who performs better would be placed into a higher ability division, therefore negating any advantage. Furthermore, divisioning policies recommend a variance of no more than 15% between the highest and lowest scores within a division. The Maximum Effort Rule of Special Olympics establishes that athletes and teams must not significantly improve from their pre-competition score to their final score. In the event of a significant improvement, it may result in a jury review and/or disqualification.

Medication

People with intellectual disabilities are at higher risk of chronic conditions requiring therapeutic medication, including asthma, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and neurologic and psychologic conditions. Special Olympics recognizes that withholding medication for these conditions could cause life-threatening impairments to health. Many of the commonly prescribed medications that Special Olympics athletes are required to take may result in a positive drug test which could disqualify an athlete or result in loss of a medal won in competition. Such outcomes would negate the hard work, training, achievement and overall beneficial impact sports training provides to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Additionally, placing the responsibility on Special Olympics athletes to apply for Therapeutic Use Exceptions, under circumstances where therapeutic medication or methods are widely prescribed to control or minimize disabilities or for acute or to treat chronic health conditions, would place an onerous burden on the athletes, their families, guardians and caregivers; impose significant financial burdens on Special Olympics Accredited Programs, which provide training and sporting competitions to Special Olympics athletes free of charge; and, would likely create significant barriers to participation for Special Olympics athletes, for whom sports training provides significant opportunity for societal and community integration, health maintenance and esteem building.

Thus, erecting barriers to participation based on drug testing or the need to apply for Therapeutic Use Exceptions for Special Olympics athletes, would defeat the Special Olympics mission which seeks to create positive and meaningful sporting experiences for people with intellectual disabilities; to integrate individuals with intellectual disability into society at large; and, to educate communities about the mission of Special Olympics and the capabilities of people with intellectual disabilities.

Special Olympics Anti-Doping Policy

Special Olympics stands strongly against cheating and does not permit the use of performance-enhancing drugs by its athletes. Special Olympics believes athletes with intellectual disabilities who are required to take legal, physician-prescribed medication necessary to carry out the functions of daily living, or to treat acute or chronic health conditions, should not be subject to anti-doping control requirements that apply to non-Special Olympics athletes. Special Olympics acknowledges the importance and beneficial role anti-doping standards play in the world of competitive sports, and will protect its athletes' fundamental right to participate in sport free from the use of performance enhancing drugs thereby promoting health, fairness and equality in sporting competitions.

Special Olympics takes the following actions to ensure that its athletes participate in high quality competitions free of doping:

- **Provide information to Special Olympics coaches about the serious health ramifications of performance enhancing drug use.**
- **Members of all Special Olympics official Delegates (Athletes, Unified Partners, Heads of Delegation, Assistant Heads of Delegation, Coaches, Medical Staff and Additional Staff) shall sign a code of conduct ensuring they will not drink alcohol, smoke or take illegal or performance enhancing drugs during competitions, in accordance with Article 1 of the Special Olympics Sport Rules. If a Special Olympics member violates any part of the Code of Conduct, Special Olympics may impose disciplinary actions. These may include, but not be limited to: verbal or written warnings, suspension, or loss of sport certification. Written documentation of incident will be kept on file in the Local Program, Region and SOI Headquarter Office.**