



Updated: April 2026

POLICY STATEMENT

Special Olympics International has determined, for the health and welfare of its participants, to prohibit recreational swimming at any time while under the auspices of Special Olympics. This policy statement applies not only to the time at Special Olympics competitions or activities but also while in transit to/from Special Olympics competitions or activities. Special Olympics Wyoming has adopted this statement as a mandate from the governing body.

DEFINING RECREATIONAL SWIMMING

Recreational Swimming is any swimming or swimming-like activities that occur outside of sanctioned Special Olympics swimming or water-based sports (kayaking, canoeing, stand up paddleboarding) training or competition. Examples of recreational swimming would include participating in swimming or swimming-like activities (Jacuzzis, hot tubs) at pools, lakes, oceans, rivers, water parks, or other bodies of water during an athlete, team or delegations' "downtime" during a Special Olympics training, competition, or activity. This definition includes but is not limited to housing and activity locations such as hotels, dormitories, military base housing, private residences, parks, and host town accommodations.

APPLICABILITY

This policy is in effect from the time the participant comes under the supervision or purview of Special Olympics Wyoming for practice, competition or activity to the time they are no longer under the care or purview of Special Olympics Wyoming for said practice, competition or activity. This policy applies to all Special Olympics Wyoming programs. **There will be no exceptions.**

FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH RECREATIONAL SWIMMING POLICY

Any participant found in violation of this policy is subject to potential repercussions including but not limited to disqualification from the competition, being sent home from training, competition, or activity at their or their legal guardian's expense, temporary suspension or permanent suspension. Any individual that knowingly allows recreational swimming to take place or fails to report it to the appropriate individual (coach, HOD, SO Wyoming Staff and volunteers), is subject to the repercussions previously listed.

Any area/local program involved in the infraction shall not stay at a facility (hotel) with a pool at the next state event. This includes all athletes, teams, etc. from that program (area/local). Any coach/chaperone not adhering to this policy will be subject to a Code of Conduct review.

COMMUNICATION WITH ATHLETES, UNIFIED PARTNERS, PARENTS, AND GUARDIANS

This policy shall be communicated to all athletes, Unified partners, coaches, volunteers, parents, and guardians. Local Programs must sign a copy of the policy, to be kept on file at the SOWY Office, which will include a statement that they have shared the policy with athletes, Unified partners, coaches, volunteers, and family members. It is the responsibility of Local Program Coordinator to clearly communicate this policy to all team members.

***** A copy of this policy, signed by Local Program Coordinator, must be on file at the Special Olympics Wyoming office prior to their team attending competition. *****

SPECIAL OLYMPICS RECREATIONAL SWIMMING POLICY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Can an athlete or Unified partner participate in recreational swimming at a Special Olympics Wyoming competition if under the supervision of their parent/guardian?

No, athletes and Unified partners may not swim at any time while under the auspices of a Special Olympics Wyoming competition or event. There are no exceptions to this policy.

2. Does this policy apply to non-athletes (coaches, Unified partners, volunteers, staff)?

Yes. Any individual under the auspices of Special Olympics must abide by this policy. Coaches, Unified Partners, volunteers, and staff provide leadership and set an example for our athletes.

3. If an athlete is training, competing, or engaging in an activity with a state or jurisdiction with a conflicting policy, what should he/she do?

The Special Olympics Wyoming policy is in full force even if the athlete is supervised by a Special Olympics coach or chaperone operating under a different policy. Direction to abandon Special Olympics Wyoming policy and comply with a conflicting state policy may only be granted by the Special Olympics Wyoming President/CEO.

4. How can my team practice for Swimming competitions?

Teams that are training for competition may do so only by following all current "Safety Considerations" as detailed in the official Special Olympics Swimming Sport Rules. A link to the official Special Olympics Swimming Sport Rules can be found at www.sowy.org.

Background: Special Olympics Wyoming has enacted the Recreation Swimming Policy to ensure the health and safety of all Special Olympics participants. Special Olympics participants should always remember that safety comes first and should take reasonable steps to help minimize the risks for injury or accidental drowning related to recreational swimming. By way of history, recreational swimming has been a leading cause of death or serious injury in Special Olympics, amongst athletes, dating back to the mid-1970s.

Local Programs should consult with the SOWY State Office for additional support.