



Special Olympics Handbook

Table of Contents

RVSRA SPECIAL OLYMPICS CONTACTS	2
SECTION ONE: OVERVIEW	3
Special Olympics Mission Statement.....	3
River Valley Rec’s Special Olympics Goal Statement	3
Overview of Special Olympics Illinois	3
General Eligibility – Special Olympics Illinois Policy	3
General Eligibility Requirements – River Valley Special Rec.....	4
Required Paperwork	4
Age Groups, Divisions, & Team Structure	4
Key Dates	4
Refunds	5
SECTION TWO: SPECIAL OLYMPICS COE PORTAL	5
SECTION 3: SEASON EXPECTATIONS	8
Attendance	8
Athlete/ Partner Code of Conduct	8
Spectator/ Coaches Code of Conduct	10
Zero Tolerance Policy.....	10
Travel/ Overnight Supervision	10
Advancement to State	11
Uniforms	11
Seizures	11
Concussion	12
Broken Bones and Casts	12
Ankle and Knee Injury	13
SECTION 5: COMMUNICATION AND UPDATES	13
SECTION 6: VOLUNTEERING AND SUPPORT	14
Volunteer Code of Conduct	14
SUMMARY	15

RVSRA SPECIAL OLYMPICS CONTACTS

Emily Ramirez, *Director of Programming*

Email: emily@rivervalleysra.com

Work Cell Phone: (815) 351-9411

Ericka Esters, Office Coordinator

Email: ericka@rivervalleysra.com

Office Phone Number: (815) 933-7336

RVSRA Office Hours: 9:00 AM- 1:00 PM Monday- Friday

Address: 1335 E Broadway Street, Bradley

Phone: (815) 933-7336

Website: rivervalleysra.com

SECTION ONE: OVERVIEW

Special Olympics Mission Statement

Special Olympics Illinois provides year-round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities by giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in a sharing of gifts, skill and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.

River Valley Rec's Special Olympics Goal Statement

River Valley Special Recreation's Association's goal is to foster physical fitness, teamwork, and personal development through a diverse range of sports. RVSRA believes that by providing participants of all ages and skill levels with opportunities to improve their athletic abilities, develop leadership skills and promote lifelong health and wellness, their quality of life will be enriched.

Overview of Special Olympics Illinois

Special Olympics Illinois is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization that raises funds through private means, such as donations and grants. Special Olympics Illinois is accredited by Special Olympics, Inc., which operates in all 50 states and in more than 170 countries worldwide. Special Olympics Illinois supports nearly 22,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities, more than 20,000 Young Athletes ages 2-7 with and without intellectual disabilities and 40,000 coaches and volunteers as they compete in 19 Olympic type sports in 180 competitions annually.

General Eligibility – Special Olympics Illinois Policy

Special Olympics Illinois training and competition is open to every person with intellectual disabilities who is at least 8 years of age, with no maximum age limit for participation. All athletes must create an online profile through Special Olympics' Center of Excellence (COE) and complete the required forms annually. All forms are now completed online via the portal.

General Eligibility Requirements – River Valley Special Rec

Required Paperwork

In order to participate in River Valley Special Rec's Special Olympics Program an athlete must:

- Complete registration (either in person or online) by the deadline for the specific sport and have submitted at least 50% payment of the program fee to RVSRA.
- Complete an Annual Information Form or have a current one on file.
- Create an online account through Special Olympics' COE portal and have a current Health History and Release form and Athlete Acknowledgement form. (Both forms must be renewed annually through the COE portal.)

Age Groups, Divisions, & Team Structure

What makes Special Olympics different than other sports organizations is divisioning. Divisions are based on scores that are recorded to Special Olympics. Athletes are then seeded into competitive divisions based on their age, sex, and ability. Divisions are established so they are "even." An "even" division is one in which all participants, based on training and competition performance records, have a reasonable chance of winning. In situations where there are not enough competitors to hold competition in a certain age or sex group, the athletes are combined within the same ability range. This division is then called an "open division." Because the goal for each Special Olympics athlete is to do his/her best, every athlete receives either a medal or a ribbon for competing.

River Valley Special Rec's Special Olympics programs are open to participants **ages 16 and up.**

Key Dates

The game and practice schedule will be provided to athletes and their parent/guardian prior to the season starting. Regional and state tournament

dates, times, and locations are set by Special Olympics Illinois. River Valley Special Rec will release that information to families as soon as it is received. Athletes and their parent/guardian are responsible for looking ahead at the season schedule and looking for their own scheduling conflicts. River Valley Special Rec and Special Olympics Illinois cannot schedule practices, games, and tournaments around other commitments athletes might have.

After releasing the practice and game schedule, River Valley Special Rec will provide athletes with a deadline to cancel out of the program due to scheduling conflicts. If the participant makes the office aware of their cancellation prior to the deadline, the athlete will receive a credit for the full amount. No refunds or credits will be given after the deadline to drop.

Refunds

Refunds are not provided for games, practices or tournaments that are cancelled. Special Olympic program fees are based on participation in the full season, not individual events. Many program costs- such as staffing, facility use, and planning- are fixed and incurred regardless of cancellations.

SECTION TWO: SPECIAL OLYMPICS COE PORTAL

To be eligible to participate in Special Olympics, all athletes must keep their forms in the online COE portal up to date, renewing them annually. Athletes are responsible for meeting the deadlines to complete these forms. Failure to do so may result in the athlete being removed from the team without a refund. This is in accordance with Special Olympics Illinois' policy.

Directions to Set Up Profile in COE Portal

1. Access the Portal
 - Click this link: www.soill.org
 - At the top of the page, click "About Us" → then select "Center of Excellence."
 - Scroll down and click "Visit the CEO Portal."
2. Create an Account

- Click “Create an Account.”
- Under Program, select Illinois.
- Under Role, choose one:
 - Athlete: I am registering myself and will manage my own account and medical records.
 - Parent/Guardian/Family: I am registering someone else (my child/athlete). → Important: Create an account for you (the parent/guardian) first—unless your athlete is able to manage their own account.

3. Enter Parent/Guardian Information

- Use an email address you can access right away (a verification code will be sent).
- Complete the profile questions for the parent/guardian:
 - Date of birth
 - Gender
 - Race
 - Preferred language
 - T-shirt size
 - Bio (optional – you may leave this blank)
- Select your Region → choose Region E. Then click the “+” find Kankakee then click the “+” again and search River Valley Special Recreation Association.
 - ⚠ If you do not see this option, email Emily at Emily@rivervalleysra.com.
- Enter the parent/guardian home address and emergency contact information.
- Click Save and Continue. This will bring you to your portal page where you add your athlete.

4. Add Your Athlete/Participant

- You will be taken to “Welcome to My Registration Zone.”
- Click “Go to My Participant.”

- In the blue box, click “Register Participant.”
- Choose if you will receive emails on behalf of your athlete: ○ Yes: It will use the same email as your account. ○ No: Enter a different email address.
- Enter your athlete’s address and emergency contact information.

5. Complete Athlete Health & History

- Go to your participant’s name → select Health History.
- Complete the following forms:
 - Athlete Acknowledgement Form
 - Health History & Release
- Review and click the box “I have read” → it should now show as Complete.
- Answer all required questions. If something does not apply, select Save and Continue.
- Add any medications (if applicable).
- Sign electronically (E-Sign) the medical form OR download, sign, and upload it back into the system.
 - ⚠️ Reminder when signing: Be sure to select the correct role: Parent/Guardian if you are signing for your child, or Athlete if the athlete is signing for themselves. There will be a drop down button on the E-sign to change it to the correct person.

6. Final Reminders

- Save your login credentials! River Valley Special Recreation staff cannot reset your password.
- Forms must be updated and signed every year.
- A doctor's signature is no longer required.
- All forms must be completed before your athlete can begin any River Valley Special Rec Special Olympics sport.

SECTION 3: SEASON EXPECTATIONS

Attendance

All athletes are expected to attend at least 70% of practices. If an athlete's attendance falls under 70% at any time, RVSRA does reserve the right to remove the athlete from the team without credit or refund. **This is a standard set by SOILL.**

Athlete/ Partner Code of Conduct

Participation in Special Olympics is both an honor and a privilege. The primary purpose of this code of conduct is to establish a standard for athlete and partner behavior that will ensure the safety and well-being of all athletes, partners, coaches, and volunteers involved in training and competition. All athletes and partners are expected to abide by this code of conduct established by Special Olympics Illinois:

Athletes and partners agree to the following code:

1. Commit to train regularly and attend at least 70% of scheduled practices.
2. Show respect for those volunteers, coaches, officials, and event coordinators who, through their time and efforts, provide Special Olympics opportunities.
3. Show respect for all competitors and display good sportsmanship throughout the Special Olympics event.
4. Show respect for all competition facilities and equipment.
5. Commit to knowing and following the rules and policies for all Special Olympics events.
6. Participate honestly and with maximum effort in all preliminary trials and/or finals. Athletes and partners will not "hold back" in preliminary trials just to get into less competitive final divisions.
7. Refrain from the use of profanity or verbal abuse toward anyone associated with the Special Olympics event.
8. Refrain from the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, and any other controlled substances.

9. Refrain from the use of tobacco in restricted areas.
10. Refrain from inappropriate or unwanted physical, verbal, or sexual advances on others.
11. Refrain from any form of personal abuse (verbal, physical, emotional, etc.) toward coaches, athletes, unified partners, family members, volunteers and spectators. Such behavior will not be tolerated by Special Olympics Illinois.
12. Refrain from dating or having a relationship with any Special Olympics volunteer or staff member. Please refer to the Volunteer/Athlete Dating Policy for complete details regarding this policy.
13. Refrain from using drugs for the purpose of improving performance. Refrain from violent or disruptive behavior.
14. Refrain from any illegal activities.

Should the behavior of any athlete or partner be contrary to this code of conduct, then one or more of the following steps may be taken by the RVSRA staff, Sports Officials, and/or Special Olympics Illinois:

1. The athlete or partner and coach will be notified of the undesirable behavior and be requested to remedy the situation for continued participation.
2. The athlete or partner will be requested to withdraw from the remainder of the event.

In cases of extreme or repeated behavior contrary to this code of conduct, River Valley Special Rec and/or Special Olympics Illinois may:

1. Prevent the athlete or partner from participating in Special Olympics for a specified period of time.
2. Prevent the athlete or partner from participating in Special Olympics indefinitely.

Specific complaints against an athlete or partner must be made to the River Valley Special Rec Executive Director and/ or appropriate SOILL Region Director.

Spectator/ Coaches Code of Conduct

When you are attending a SOILL event as a River Valley Special Rec fan and spectator, you are representing our agency and our programming.

Spectators and coaches are required to follow the Code of Conduct listed below:

1. Display good sportsmanship. Always respect players, coaches and officials.
2. Refrain from the use of profanity or verbal abuse toward anyone associated with the Special Olympics event.
3. Act appropriately; do not taunt or disturb other fans; enjoy the game together.
4. Cheer good plays of all participants; avoid booing opponent. Cheer in a positive manner and encourage fair play; profanity and objectionable cheers or gestures are offensive.
5. Support the referees and coaches by trusting their judgment and integrity.
6. Respect areas designated as private for players, coaches and officials.
7. Be supportive after the game—win or lose. Recognize good effort, teamwork and sportsmanship.

Zero Tolerance Policy

River Valley Special Rec and SOILL have a Zero Tolerance Policy on inappropriate and disruptive behavior that interferes with other spectators of the game. You may be removed or suspended from practices or games by agency staff/ coaches or SOILL volunteers if you are in violation of the code of conduct guidelines.

Travel/ Overnight Supervision

Travel and/ or an overnight stay may be required for away games and tournaments. River Valley Special Rec will do our best to offer transportation to off site locations, but transportation is not guaranteed.

Overnight supervision will not be provided by River Valley Special Rec. Athletes must be able to be independent during the overnight hours. River Valley

Special Rec reserves the right to determine if a participant can be in our care during a Special Olympics sporting event that requires an overnight stay.

Advancement to State

Only athletes receiving a Gold Medal will advance to State (unless noted otherwise). An additional "State Fee" will be applied to athletes' accounts who qualify for State. These fees vary per sport and will be shared with participants and their parent/guardian prior to the State Tournament.

Uniforms

River Valley Special Rec will provide athletes with a uniform for team sports (basketball and volleyball). Uniforms will be distributed to athletes to borrow for their athletic season. Uniforms and bags (if applicable) belong to RVSRA and must be returned at the end of the season. If uniforms and bags are not returned or not returned in the condition they were received, a \$20 fee will be applied to the athlete's account.

Athletes are responsible for laundering their uniform prior to each game and prior to returning at the end of the season.

River Valley Special Rec requires athletes in most sports to purchase their own competition shirt. This includes athletes participating in Track and Field, Cornhole, Bocce, Bowling, and Golf. Shirts can be purchased through our office for \$20, though the golf polo may cost more. Athletes get to keep their shirt and are welcome to wear it at other River Valley Special Rec Special Olympics events.

SECTION 4: SAFETY AND INJURY PROTOCOLS

Athlete safety is always River Valley Special Rec's top priority. As injuries vary in severity for the safety of the athlete, these protocols are broad and may be adjusted to better fit individual situations.

Seizures

River Valley Special Rec recognizes many of our athletes experience seizures on a regular basis. Athletes who experience seizures must have a current

Seizure Care Plan on file via the participant's UltraCamp account. Staff will follow all protocols outlined in the participant's Seizure Care Plan in the event of a seizure. River Valley Special Rec will remove the athlete from the remainder of play the day the seizure occurs. River Valley Special Rec reserves the right to require a Physician's note stating the athlete may return to play if the seizure is severe.

Concussion

Any athlete with a suspected concussion will be immediately removed from play by River Valley Special Rec staff/coaches, and will not be permitted to return to activity until they are assessed by a qualified medical professional. Only qualified medical professionals should diagnose whether a concussion has occurred, or provide advice as to whether the player can return to play. There will be no return to play on the day of a concussive injury.

River Valley Special Rec requires a Physician's note clearing the athlete for participation in the event of a suspected concussion. Without this, return to practices and games cannot be allowed.

Broken Bones and Casts

While a broken bone in the arm, wrist or hand does not prohibit an athlete from playing all sports, safety considerations of the athlete and the other players around them is paramount. If the athlete is wearing a cast or splint, the following protocol must occur:

- The athlete/parent must provide medical notification to the RVSRA Office stating that the player can continue with practice and game play.
- River Valley Special Rec's coaching staff will comply with the Dr. notice and any restrictions that apply, if any are given.
- Assuming the broken bone is in a cast or splint the affected area must be wrapped and padded at all times during any practice or game play. The coach will determine sufficient protection during practice and game play.

- The athlete/parent accepts the risk of playing while injured. The athlete may increase his/her risk of injury, either directly related to the affected area or another location as the player may adjust their play due to the injury.
- The athlete/parent must keep the River Valley Special Rec's office updated on any changes and recommendations from the Dr.
- A note is required by the Dr. stating the athlete can return to 100% full activity for practice and game play.

Ankle and Knee Injury

In the event of a strain or sprain being severe enough to require a visit to the Dr. the following protocol must be followed:

- A Dr. notification must be provided by the athlete/parent to the River Valley Special Rec office staff
- The athlete/parent accepts the risk of playing while injured. The athlete may increase his/her risk of injury, either directly related to the affected area or another location as the athlete may adjust their play to compensate for the injured area.
- In the event a Dr. note was provided that designated restrictions, a second Dr. note is required stating that the player can return to 100% full activity for practice and game.
- The Dr. note clearing the player for full activity must be provided to the River Valley Special Rec Office.

SECTION 5: COMMUNICATION AND UPDATES

River Valley Special Rec will communicate with participants and/ or parents/ guardians through the following methods: email, phone calls, and text messages from the agency Special Olympics cell phone. River Valley Special Rec will ONLY communicate information to individuals listed on the participant's UltraCamp account.

All schedules will be emailed out to the email that is listed in UltraCamp. Additionally, we will try to send out a text to make you aware an email has been sent. Any last-minute cancellations, changes, or reminders will be sent

via text to the phone number listed as the “Primary Contact” in your UltraCamp account. Text messages are sent via UltraCamp. River Valley Special Rec staff cannot see responses sent back to that number.

If you do need to contact our office regarding Special Olympics programs questions or concerns, please contact:

Emily Ramirez, Director of Programming: (815)523-6264 or emily@rivervalleysra.com

Ericka Esters, Office Coordinator: (815)933-7336 or ericka@rivervalleysra.com

Special Olympics Cell Phone: (779)401-0540. Per our policy, this phone will only be on a half hour before a program/ event until the end of the program/ event that day.

SECTION 6: VOLUNTEERING AND SUPPORT

Parental involvement is greatly encouraged and appreciated in River Valley Special Rec’s Special Olympics programs. Parents/ guardians can show their support by helping with carpooling, volunteering to keep score at games, becoming an athlete’s 1:1, or providing supervision at practices and games. Please note, to volunteer for the agency’s Special Olympics programs, you will have to complete SOILL’s volunteer screening process, including setting up an online account through the SOIL COE Portal. Please contact our office if you are interested in volunteering.

Volunteer Code of Conduct

As a River Valley Special Rec volunteer, it is expected that everyone will play a positive role at the agency’s Special Olympics events by following this code of conduct:

1. Carry out all aspects of your assignment.
2. Fulfill all requirements set by RVSRA and SOILL by their deadlines.
3. Notify the volunteer coordinator if an assignment cannot be completed.
4. Refrain from smoking, consuming alcohol, or using profanity.
5. Refrain from any inappropriate contact or relationship with athletes or other participants.

6. Refrain from dating or having a sexual relationship with athletes.
7. Refrain from any form of personal abuse (verbal, physical, emotional, etc.) toward coaches, athletes, unified partners, volunteers, spectators, family members, etc. Such behavior will not be tolerated by Special Olympics.
8. Follow the established rules and guidelines of Special Olympics and any agency involved with Special Olympics.
9. Support the decisions of referees, judges, and committees, and use proper dissent processes.
10. Be respectful during ceremonies and help athletes and partners do the same.
11. Praise the athletes and partners for their efforts and encourage them to be happy for the success of other athletes and partners.
12. Provide for the general welfare, health and safety of all athletes, partners and volunteers.
13. Report any observations, either in the physical environment or an individual's behavior, which may cause potential harm.
14. Look for constructive ways to overcome obstacles.
15. Be open to new ideas and new ways of doing things.
16. Extend involvement to other roles of leadership and training.
17. Delight in the change that your involvement makes in the life of the athletes.
18. Out of respect for our athletes, please refrain from using cell phones or texting while working at an event. We need your full attention to your task.

SUMMARY

River Valley Special Rec'S Special Olympics programming would not be possible without support from our families. Thank you in advance for your compliance on these policies and procedures. Please reach out to our office with any questions or concerns: (815) 933-7336.