



2019 NJSIAA-SONJ UNIFIED TRACK & FIELD

Special Olympics New Jersey (SONJ) and the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) are committed to working with schools to provide inclusive sport opportunities through Special Olympics Unified Sports®. Unified Sports bring people with and without disabilities together on the same team, each player an equal and meaningful part of the team. Unified Sports teams are made up of nearly equal numbers of students with and without disabilities of similar age and ability.

Unified competition will be offered at selected meets in one or more of the following events: 100 meters, 200 meters, 400 meters, 4x100 relay, 4x400 relay, shot put, and running long jump.

I. SCHOOL ELIGIBILITY

The Unified Sports Track & Field program is open to all high schools in New Jersey that:

1. Currently have an Interscholastic Track & Field program and are participating in the 2019 NJSIAA Track & Field season.
2. Are able to create a Unified Track & Field team that is comprised of athletes with and without disabilities. (See section III. Team Roster and Eligibility)
3. Will commit to ensure that the Unified Track & Field team from the high school will participate in a minimum of two local meets against other high schools with Unified Track & Field teams.
 - a. Participating in one tri competition would meet this requirement
4. Will commit to include the Unified Sports team as part of the interscholastic athletic program at the school.
5. Work with Special Olympics New Jersey to determine a long range plan for sustainability of the program at the school.

If you have questions about your school's eligibility, please contact Special Olympics New Jersey at 609-896-8000

II. HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Athletic directors at eligible schools must complete the following to participate:

1. Teams wishing to advance to sectional meets, group meets and the Meet of Champions will need to register with the NJSIAA prior to Wednesday, May 3, 2019. Contact Al Stumpf at astumpf@njsiaa.org for more details.

III. GUIDELINES FOR CREATING UNIFIED SPORTS TEAMS

Unified Track & Field allows for Special Olympics athletes and Unified partners of all abilities to participate meaningfully, as well as including students with other types of disabilities (i.e. physical disabilities, visual and/or hearing impairment, etc.). The following guideline should be used when assembling a Unified Sports team in order to optimize an environment that will foster social inclusion:

- **Unified Sports® teams are composed of a proportional number of students with intellectual disabilities, other types of disabilities, and students without disabilities who train and compete together on the same team. However, a Unified Sports team should never be comprised solely of individuals with disabilities**

Team Rosters and Eligibility

1. Unified Track & Field teams should have rosters of between 6-20 participants who are of similar ages. Teams may be male, female, or coed.
2. The team composition should be a combination of students with intellectual disabilities, students with other types of disabilities, and students without disabilities. Ideally, approximately 50% of the team should be composed of students with disabilities.
3. Current **varsity** Track & Field members are NOT eligible to be members of the Unified Sports team, however, sub-varsity athletes may compete in both programs.
4. As per NJSIAA rules, students will be limited to participating in one strenuous sport per season.
5. All participants need to have the appropriate paperwork completed as required by the NJSIAA, and the school system.
6. Teams must have one coach who is solely responsible for the management and training of the Unified Sports team. Assistant coaches may be added based on the number of participants on the team. A ratio of 1 coach for every 12 participants (Unified athletes and Unified partners) is a good guideline.
7. Coaches must meet the standards delineated by the NJSIAA and the school system where they coach.
8. Coaches must complete the free [NFHS Coaching Unified Sports](#) course to become a certified Unified Sports Coach.

IV. RESOURCES FOR UNIFIED SPORTS TRACK & FIELD

Special Olympics New Jersey recognizes there are resources needed to not only start up this program but also to sustain it on a yearly basis. Therefore, high schools participating will have the opportunity to obtain assistance through Special Olympics New Jersey to ensure schools have the necessary resources for success. These resources are being provided to assist schools in launching Unified Sports and helping to ensure successful implementation of the program. On an ongoing basis, schools will work with Special Olympics New Jersey to create a long-term plan to sustain the program.

Schools that received Play Unified grant funding for the 2018-2019 school year may use those funds for the items listed below, with prior approval from Special Olympics New Jersey. Schools that did not receive a grant, but are in need of seed money to begin a Unified Track & Field program should contact Susan Colacello at scc@sonj.org. A limited amount of start-up grants may be available to assist schools with the costs associated with the resources described below.

Uniforms. It is expected that Unified Sports teams will wear the same high school uniform as other student-athletes that are participating on the high school track & field team. Special Olympics New Jersey may offer assistance to ensure all athletes and Unified partners are outfitted properly.

Coach. It is expected that Unified Sports teams will be considered part of the current high school track & field program for the duration of the season. Special Olympics New Jersey may help support a stipend (up to \$1500) for a coach who will be solely responsible for the training and management of the Unified Sports team.

Transportation. It is expected that Unified Sports teams will travel with the current high school track & field program to any away meets that have Unified Sports competition, including the NJSIAA Meet of Champions. Grant funding may be used to help subsidize additional transportation needs that are directly related to the Unified Track & Field program.

Equipment. Special Olympics rules incorporate many of the same rules as interscholastic track & field. However, there may be a need for specific equipment for certain events (ie: 6 lb. shot put). Special Olympics New Jersey may assist in providing any specialized equipment needed.

2019 NJSIAA-SONJ UNIFIED TRACK & FIELD COMPETITION RULES

I. OFFICIAL EVENTS AND ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

1. Unified Track & Field events can be part of invitationals, dual meets, tri meets, conference or county meets, state championships and/or comprised solely of Unified Track & Field teams.
2. **Unified Track & Field events that are held in conjunction with an interscholastic competition, including the NJSIAA Track & Field Meet of Champions, will be scored in their own separate division and will not count toward NJSIAA Team Championship scoring.**
3. **Following are the official Unified events that may be offered at track & field competitions:**

<u>Track Events</u>	<u>Field Events</u>	<u>Relay Events</u>
100 meters	Shot Put	4 x 100 meters*
200 meters	Long Jump	4 x 400 meters*
400 meters		

Other Unified events can be offered at the discretion of the meet director.

****These relay events will be the only Unified events offered at the Meet of Champions***

4. Participants may enter one individual track event and one individual field event. They also maybe selected to participate on one relay team.
5. Unified Track & Field teams are not required to enter participants in every event.
6. Relay teams must consist of two runners with disabilities (Unified athletes) and two runners without disabilities (Unified partners). Coaches can place runners in any order.

7. A Unified Track & Field team may enter a maximum of two 4x100 meter relay teams and two 4x400 meter relay teams during the regular season. Unified relays will be limited to one entry per race at sectional and group meets.

II. OFFICIAL RULES

1. All track & field events will follow National Federation of State High School Associations rules, except where there are rules modifications set forth in the Official Special Olympics rules for athletics. These rules can be found on the Special Olympics web site at (pg. 14-15, sec. 3.8-3.9.5): <http://media.specialolympics.org/resources/sports-essentials/sport-rules/Athletics-Sports-Rules.pdf>
2. Highlighted track event rules appearing in the Special Olympics rules book include the following:
 - a. A runner who is charged with two false starts in the same race will be disqualified from that race.
 - b. All runners should run within their lanes. However, if a runner either runs outside his/her lane in the straight or runs outside the outer lane on the bend, with no material advantage being gained, and if no other runner is obstructed, then the competitor should not be disqualified.
3. Highlighted field event rules appearing in the Special Olympics rules book:
 - a. All distances must be marked **using feet and inches.**
 - b. In the shot put and running long jump, each athlete shall be allowed four non-consecutive attempts. All four attempts shall be measured and recorded for breaking ties. The longest measurement of the four attempts shall be used for scoring.
 - i. **Running Long Jump:** A competitor must be able to jump at least 1 meter, which is usually the minimum distance between the take-off board and sand pit, in order to participate in this event. All competitors will jump from the same 1 meter takeoff point.
 - ii. **Shot Put:** All competitors will use a 6 lb. shot put.
4. Uniforms:
 - a. It is expected that Unified Sports teams will wear the same high school uniform as other student-athletes that are participating on high school track & field team.

III. DIVISIONING AND TEAM SCORING

The fundamental difference between Special Olympics competitions and those of other sports organizations is that athletes and Unified partners of all ability levels are encouraged to participate, and every participant is recognized for his/her performance. Competitions are structured so that Unified competitors compete against other Unified competitors of similar ability in equitable divisions.

1. **Competition is conducted in co-ed divisions composed of competitors with similar abilities. Divisions consist of competitors with and without disabilities and are only determined by the participants' ability levels as expressed by times or distances.**
 - a. Since divisions are determined only by times or distances, heats can be co-ed and may potentially consist of a variety of athlete-to-partner ratios, including heats of all Unified partners or all Unified athletes.
2. **Qualifying times and distances for each competitor must be submitted at least five (5) days prior to a competition for the events in which he or she will be entered. For example, if a**

participant will be entered in the 100 meters and the running long jump, qualifying scores must be submitted for each event.

3. Ideally, the variance between the highest and lowest times or distances in a competition division should be no more than 15%. However, this variance can be expanded in order to have fuller divisions of three or more competitors.
4. The minimum number of competitors in a division should be three and the maximum number is eight. The same policy applies to the number of teams in a division at a larger invitational.
5. Team scoring is based upon the format delineated in the National Federation of State High School Associations' Track & Field Rule Book for dual meets. Since all competition divisions score points for a team, the Unified Team Track & Field rules modification is as follows:
 - a. For all types of Unified Track & Field meets (dual, triangle, or invitational) the following scoring format will be employed: 1st place scores 5 points, 2nd place scores 3 points, 3rd place scores 1 point.
6. **Every event HEAT results in the same allocation of points awarded to the teams.**
 - a. For example, if there are three divisions of the 100 meters, competitors in each of the heats/divisions will score points for their teams based upon their place of finish in the heat.
7. **In Unified Track & field, competitors of similar ability levels (as defined by qualifying times or distances) are placed in heats or divisions. Points can be earned in each division/heat based upon place of finish.**
 - a. For example, in the 100 meter all three heats would be scoring heats with 1st place in each heat scoring 5 points, 2nd place in each heat scoring 3 points, and 3rd place in each heat scoring 1 point.
 - b. Six places will be scored at state sectional and group meets with 10 points awarded to 1st place, 8 points for 2nd place, 6 points for 3rd place, 4 points for 4th place, 2 points for 5th place and 1 point for 6th place.
 - c. This is consistent with Special Olympics principles for divisioning, as well as the foundational Unified Sports principle of meaningful involvement which emphasizes athletes and partners need to have opportunities to meaningfully contribute to their team. Individuals who are divisioned by similar ability levels and can score points for their team based upon their performance in their competition division are presented with this opportunity.

IV. TEAM CLASSIFICATIONS AT COMPETITIONS

Teams at competitions can be placed in classifications using one of two approaches:

1. Teams with similar roster sizes can be grouped together. In this situation, the size between the team rosters is no more than four team members.
2. If teams have different roster sizes, then a formula is used to ensure there is competitive balance. This is due to the fact there are more opportunities for a team with more participants to score points.

How to Score a Competition Which Have Teams with Different Roster Sizes

1. If Unified Track & Field teams at a competition have different roster sizes which vary by more than four, competition organizers will use a handicapping formula, referred to as **power points**, to equalize competition. Teams with more members have additional opportunities in which to score points, which give them an advantage.
2. To address this, competition organizers will use the following formula to give more weight to the scores earned by members of teams with smaller rosters:
 - a. Take the team with the most number of participants. Divide the number representing the largest team's roster size by the size of the other teams.
 - b. Use this power points number as a multiplier factor to weigh the scores for the performances of individuals on smaller teams. Due to a smaller roster, there are less entries and therefore fewer opportunities to score. The power points elevate the impact of the scoring earned by members on these smaller teams.
 - c. The points earned based upon a participant's place of finish are multiplied by the power points number to increase value. If the multiplier is 1.5 and a team member finishes in 1st place, earning 5 points, the actual points awarded to the team would be 7.5.

Example

- Three Unified Track & field teams participate in a competition.
 - Team 1 has 16 members
 - Team 2 has 10 members
 - Team 3 has 8 members.
1. Divide Team 1's roster size (16) by Team 2's size (10) which equals 1.6
 - a. Whenever a member of Team 2 scores points in an event, it is multiplied by 1.6.
 - b. If a member of Team 2 finishes in 2nd place in the shot put which earns 3 points, it is multiplied by 1.6 and the team instead receives 4.8 points.
 2. Divide Team 1's roster size (16) by Team 3's size (8) which equals 2.
 - a. Whenever a member of Team 3 scores points in an event, it is multiplied by 2.
 - b. If a member of Team 3 finishes in 2nd place in the shot put which earns 3 points, it is multiplied by 2 and the team instead receives 6 points.

V. RULE MODIFICATIONS

1. Wheelchair Participants

- a. Students using manual wheelchairs or power wheelchairs are eligible to participate and should always be divisioned by time, like all other Unified Track & Field participants.
- b. Any points earned by a student using either a manual or power wheelchair will count toward the team's point total.
- c. For Track Events:
 - i. **MANUAL WHEELCHAIRS:** Participants may compete in the same heat against students with and without disabilities.
 - ii. **POWER WHEELCHAIRS:** Participants compete in a division which only is composed of power wheelchair competitors. Because the chair is propelled by the engine and not a person, the type of competition is different. If there is only one competitor in a division, he/she tries to exceed their personal best for the

season. If successful, he/she receives the point total for 1st place or 5 points. If not, he/she receives the point total for 2nd place or 3 points.

- iii. LANE ASSIGNMENTS: Assign two lanes for a wheelchair competitor during a race, preferably an inside lane.
 - iv. RELAYS: Only participants using a manual wheelchair are eligible to be selected as a possible member of the 4x100 or 4x400 meter relays.
- d. For Field Events
 - i. Manual and power wheelchair participants compete against students with and without disabilities.
 - e. Highlighted Event Rules
 - i. A competitor using a wheelchair finishes his/her race when all front wheels (one or two) of the wheelchair reach the finish line.
 - ii. The lanes used by wheelchair athletes should be made two track lanes wide.

2. Participants with Visual Impairments

a. Track Events

- i. Participants with visual impairments (defined as blind or with severely restricted vision) may use a guide runner to assist them. The guide runner is given one adjoining lane.
- ii. Another acceptable option is for the participant to use a guide rope held by volunteers with a relay baton attached to it. The runner grabs the baton and slides it along the rope while running or walking during the race.

3. Participants with Hearing Impairments

a. Track Events

- i. The competitor should be placed in the lane closest to the positioning of the official starter.
- ii. An assistant standing next to the starter should drop a brightly colored (red or yellow) flag/cloth when the gun sounds.
- iii. Another allowable option is to have the assistant stand behind the competitor with the hearing impairment and tap him/her on the shoulder when the gun sounds.

VI. ADVANCEMENT TO STATE MEETS

Unified Track & Field only functions as a *team* sport, therefore, the entire Unified *team* competing at a state event will advance to the next level, not the top performing individuals. The NJSIAA will be offering Unified Track & Field events at state sectional competitions, Group Meets, and the Meet of Champions in the following events:

Track Events

100 meters
200 meters
400 meters

Field Events

Shot Put
Long Jump

Relay Events

4x100 meters*
4x400 meters*

****These relay events will be the only Unified events offered at the Meet of Champions***

Advancement

1. To be eligible to compete at a sectional event, Unified teams must have competed in at least two other meets during the regular season.
2. At each of the Unified sectional meets, the **top six (6) Unified TEAMS** will be eligible to advance to the Group Meets, which will be the state team championship event for Unified Track & Field.
 - a. Unified teams will enter the same Group Meet in which their high school would participate.
 - b. At the conclusion of the Group Meets, a Unified team state champion will be determined.
3. The **top six (6)** relay teams for each relay event at the Group Meets will be eligible to advance to the Meet of Champions.

Important post-season dates:

- i. **Unified Meets: TBD (between April 23- May 14)**
- ii. **Unified Sectional Meets: TBD; May 19th**
- iii. **Group Meets: June 6, 2019** (Special Olympics New Jersey Summer Games)
- iv. **Meet of Champions: June 13, 2020** (ACT Date)

State Event Rules & Regulations

1. Teams competing in state meets are limited to a maximum roster size of 14 participants (~7 Unified athletes and 7 Unified partners), plus two (2) alternates.
 - a. Teams advancing to the Group Meet must be the same team members and approved alternates who competed at the sectional competition.
2. Teams may enter up to three (3) participants per track event and per field event at state meets.
3. Teams may enter one (1) relay team per event at state meets.
4. Six places will be scored at state meets with 10 points awarded to 1st place, 8 points for 2nd place, 6 points for 3rd place, 4 points for 4th place, 2 points for 5th place and 1 point for 6th place.

VII. CONTACTS

1. Questions about Unified Track & Field rules, eligibility, scoring, divisioning, or NJSIAA Unified competitions can be directed to Jess Stevenson, Unified Sports Coordinator at Special Olympics New Jersey via email at jns@sonj.org or by phone at 609-896-8000 x286
2. Questions about registering for Unified Track and Field, advancement, registration, and the post-season can be directed to Al Stumpf, NJSIAA Assistant Director via email at astumpf@njsiaa.org or by phone at 609-259-2776.
3. Questions about the Unified Champion Schools program and grant funding can be directed to Susan Colacello, Director of School and Community Partnerships at Special Olympics New Jersey via email at scc@sonj.org or by phone at 609-896-8000 x284