

INTRODUCTION:

Special Olympics is an athlete-centered movement that welcomes athletes with intellectual disabilities of all abilities to participate in sports training and competition. Special Olympics is open to persons with intellectual disabilities age eight and older and offers a Young Athletes program for individuals with intellectual disabilities under the age of eight.

The health and safety of all Special Olympics participants is of paramount importance to Special Olympics. Participants should feel that every Special Olympics event is a safe and positive experience and should not be fearful of other athletes, coaches or volunteers.

Arranging housing for overnight events involves the consideration of a variety of factors, including the varying abilities, ages and behaviors of athletes, the availability of housing and the costs associated with overnight accommodations. The Special Olympics International Risk Management & Insurance Task Force (RMITF) has developed the following policy whereby each U.S. Program is required to create a written housing policy that meets its unique housing needs, but also includes the minimum policy requirements outlined below. In addition to the policy requirements, the RMITF has provided best practices for each U.S. Program's consideration when developing its written housing policy, but appreciates that each U.S. Program may not be able to incorporate such practices, given the broad range of potential housing accommodations.

POLICY

POLICY REQUIREMENTS – Must be included in each U.S. Program's athlete housing policy.

- 1.) Gender – Athletes and volunteers may not share a room with an athlete or volunteer of the opposite sex. U.S. Programs may allow the following exceptions as long as the U.S. Program's written policy clearly allows for such exception.
 - a. Married athletes who are both attending the event as members of a registered delegation. This exception does not apply to the spouse of an athlete who is not participating in the event, but attending solely as a spectator.
 - b. Married volunteers who are both attending the event as members of a registered delegation. This exception does not apply if one of the volunteers is required to share a room with an athlete (other than the married couple's child), if this scenario will create a situation whereby an athlete is housed with a volunteer of the opposite sex.
 - c. Family members of the opposite sex who serve as a one-to-one chaperone for the related athlete.
 - d. Housing in a facility that has multiple private rooms in addition to living space (such as a condominium or dormitory). Both males and females may be assigned to one

condominium, if necessary, but private rooms may not be shared by individuals of the opposite sex. Chaperones must also be housed in the condominium and the chaperone/athlete ratio (as outlined in the supervision section of the policy) must be maintained.

- e. Use of barracks or other facility (such as a gym) where a large number of individuals are assigned to one room. Athletes and volunteers must be separated as much as possible by gender (for example, females on one side of the gym and males on the other side).
- 2.) Supervision - The chaperone/athlete ratio of at least one properly registered chaperone to every four athletes must be maintained during overnight events. Proper supervision can be maintained without having a chaperone present in the room at all times. All chaperones must be screened in accordance with the Special Olympics U.S. Volunteer Screening Policy.
 - 3.) Young Athletes – Young Athletes events that involve overnight activities require increased supervision and therefore, Young Athletes participants must be accompanied by a properly registered and screened parent, guardian or an individual designated by a parent or guardian at all overnight activities. Rooming assignments for Young Athletes should be separate from the remainder of the delegation, whenever possible (for example, separate hotel rooms).
 - 4.) Acknowledgment - Each U.S. Program must secure a parent's/guardian's signature acknowledging the possibility for overnight activities and that additional information about the rooming assignments or the Program's housing policy should be directed to the U.S. Program. Athletes who are legally responsible for themselves are permitted to provide acknowledgment on their own behalf.

This requirement provides confirmation that the parents/guardians are aware that the Program has a policy relative to housing arrangements, empowers the parents/guardians to learn more about the housing practices, and also provides them an opportunity to notify the U.S. Program if there are any concerns with the housing arrangements or information about which the U.S. Program should be aware. Notification may be provided and signature secured via the athlete registration form or any other method that the U.S. Program deems appropriate.

- 5.) Policy Implementation –Special Olympics New Jersey is responsible for implementing the policy at events and ensuring that the individuals responsible for implementing the policy are familiar with the policy.

BEST PRACTICES GUIDE – The following is encouraged to be considered for programs best practices into its athlete housing policy.

- 1.) Rooming Assignments – If athletes will be sharing a room, the following is a list of other items to consider when making room assignments:
 - a. Consider matching athletes based on size, level of maturity, ability and age.
 - b. Assign connecting rooms to those athletes who require additional assistance or supervision if the chaperone will not be in the same room.
 - c. Athletes and Unified Partners should not be paired together in the same room, with the exception of family members whom are registered members of the delegation.
 - d. Scratch fee per event will be assessed on unused housing

- 2.) Sleeping Arrangements –Each member of the delegation should be assigned his/her own bed.
 - a. Only as a last resort, use air mattresses to increase the number of beds available (check with facility to ensure there is not a policy against the use of air mattresses).

- 3.) Supervision - The following includes suggestions for providing athlete housing supervision:
- a. *Hotels* – Whenever possible, reserve connecting rooms so that chaperones have direct access to the athletes’ room(s). If connecting rooms are not available and the chaperone is in a room separate from the athletes for which he/she is responsible:
 - i. Ensure that the chaperone has a key to the athletes’ room(s)
 - ii. Ensure that the athletes know how to reach the chaperone at all times
 - iii. Consider using hall monitors
 - b. *Condo/Dorm (or other facility with multiple private rooms)* – Whenever possible, leave the doors to private rooms open so that chaperones can monitor each room.
 - c. *Barracks (or other facility with a large number of beds in one room)* – Whenever possible, chaperones should be assigned to a location in close proximity to the athletes he/she is supervising.
- 4.) Family Members – Prohibit family members from entering or staying in athlete housing unless the family member is an official member of the registered delegation and is screened in compliance with the Special Olympics U.S. Volunteer Screening Policy.

