

**Special
Olympics
Pennsylvania**



SPRING 2024 Season Kickoff



Agenda



Sport Offerings & Changes

Seasonal Calendar

Spring Site Registration and Sign-ups

Competition Events

Sport Offerings - Team

- Team Sports
 - Basketball:
 - 5v5 - 16-21 year old (only if there are 2 teams attending a competition) and 22+
 - 3v3 – 12-15 & 16-21 year old (only if there are 2 teams attending a competition) and 22+
 - Individuals Skills and Advanced Skills
 - Softball:
 - 22+: Traditional, Unified
 - Individual Skills

Sport Offerings - Individual

- Individual
 - Athletics: Traditional, Unified Relays
 - Swimming: Traditional, Unified Relays
 - Tennis: Traditional
 - Golf: Traditional and Unified
 - Gymnastics: Traditional
 - Equestrian: Traditional

Changes - Sports

- **Swimming**
 - Maximum Effort or Honest Effort Rule (HER) will be 15% at all State level events this season (Sectionals and Summer Games)
 - EXCEPTIONS: All events shorter than 25 yards, as well as 25 freestyle, 25 flotation, and the 4 x 25 freestyle relay will remain at the 25% limit for MER.

Future Changes - Sports

- **Softball, Golf, Tennis**

- There will be NO changes for these sports in the 2024 season.
- SOPA may look to work with Regions to provide additional competitions in these sports during the summer months in 2024 (more to come on that in the early spring)
- Beginning in 2025 SOPA intends to start a 4th “Summer Season” that will include these 3 sports.
 - We have heard from coaches/program leaders/staff how difficult it can be to train and compete in these sports in the months of March/April
 - We have also heard that in some areas these sports are already extending training into the summer months
 - SOPA would look to host culminating events in these sports in August/September

Team Sport Age Groups

Team Sport Age Groups went into effect as of August 1, 2023

- SOPA sponsored Spring Team Sports include: Softball, Basketball
- **UPDATE:** 22-40 and 40+ age groups will be combined into 22+
- GOAL – Teams are age and ability matched
- [Team Sport Age Group Resource](#) updated guidelines.
- This document includes links to two supporting documents: [Why Age Groups are Important](#) and [Exemption Process](#).
- Spring Team Sport Age Exemption deadline is March 29th
- Please review all documents for a full understanding of the age groups and how to submit exemptions. This [video](#) will explain these documents and how to submit exemption in more detail.

If you have questions, please contact your Regional Sport Director or Michelle Boone (mboone@specialolympicspa.org).

Seasons At a Glance

SEASONS AT A GLANCE



	SPRING	FALL	WINTER
Coach Site Registration	Nov. 1 - Dec. 1	April 1 - May 1	August 1 - Sept. 1
Athlete, Unified Partner, Volunteer Signup	Dec. 15 - Jan. 15	May 15 - June 15	Sept. 15 - Oct. 15
Season Length	March - June	August - November	December - March
Sports Offered	Athletics (Track & Field), Basketball, Equestrian, Golf, Gymnastics, Softball, Swimming, Tennis	Bocce, Bowling, Flag Football, Long Distance Running/Walking, Powerlifting, Soccer, Volleyball	Alpine Skiing, Bowling, Figure Skating, Floor Hockey, Snowboard, Snowshoe, Speed Skating

Site Registration

- Site Registration
 - OPEN NOW – December 1
 - Head Coaches should be completing the Site Registration form: [Spring 2024 Site Registration](#)
 - Once Site Registration is received and reviewed the RSDs will send head coach their Attendance Tracker
 - This will be auto populated with sign-ups from athletes and volunteers

Spring Sign-Ups

- **Spring Sign-Ups**

- Open December 15 – January 15
- Available on [SOPA website](#), listed by county
- IMPORTANT to get all returning athletes and volunteers to register during this time
- Share sign-up link more broadly in your community and on social media to create awareness for new athletes and volunteers.
- Everyone MUST complete sign-up to get onto a training roster

Spring Sign-Ups

Timing is important to allow for follow-up as needed prior to the season:

1. insure there are enough coaches/volunteers to accommodate the requests
2. insure adequate facilities to accommodate needs, add as needed
3. have time to review rosters and conduct targeted marketing to fill gaps with either athletes or volunteers

Spring 2024 Calendar

- **Spring Calendars 2024**
 - [EAST](#), [CENTRAL](#), [WEST](#)
 - Season start date - March 15th
 - Dryland training counts as training! Teams that can't get outdoors due to cold/rainy weather should plan to begin training indoors.
 - Season Eligibility & Age Exemptions – March 29th

Coach Certifications

- **Track 1 – Skills Training School**
 - If needed contact your Regional Sport Director
- **Track 2 – Experienced Coach**
 - Complete application within Vsys
- **Certification extension ends Dec 31, 2023**
 - WHO - certified coaches who have expired from 2020-present
 - ACTION – take 1 continuing education before Dec 31st to re-up their certification
 - After this date they will need to start certification from the beginning with a skills training

Competitions

- Local/Invitationals – March – early April
 - Better to keep this on the front end of the season as competitive opportunities in the lead up to higher level of competition
- Sectional/Regional – April - May
 - Should occur middle to end of the season
- State Level – June

State Competitions

- **Sectionals**
 - Western Spring – April 20, Carnegie Mellon Univ.
 - Central Spring – April 28, Saint Francis University
 - Eastern Spring – May 4, Kutztown University
- **State Games**
 - Summer Games – June 6-8, Penn State University

[State Competitions Important Dates and Deadlines](#)

Allocations & Advancement

- **Allocations**
 - Initial Allocations will be provided for *(to be shared by Dec 31, 2023)*:
 - Eastern Sectional Swimming
 - Summer Games for Athletics, Swimming, Gymnastics, Equestrian
- **Advancement/Qualifiers**
 - Must attend Sectionals and Qualify for Summer Games in the following sports: Basketball, Softball, Tennis, Golf
 - Advancement numbers will be shared April 19th

2026 USA Games

- All State Level events in 2024 will be qualifiers for 2026 USA Games to be held in Minnesota
- We do not anticipate receiving allocations until later in 2024



SPECIAL OLYMPICS
USA GAMES
MINNESOTA 2026

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**We can accomplish more
together than we can alone.
- Max De Pree**

