

# Special Olympics Kentucky Recreational Swimming Guidelines

## Objective

It is always Special Olympics' intent to take steps 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-1970's. Recommendations were made in the early 1980's to State Programs (by SOI) to examine this issue and take steps to address recreational swimming.

## What is Considered Recreational Swimming?

Recreational swimming is any swimming or swimming-like activities that occurs outside of sanctioned Special Olympics swimming or water-based sports (sailing, kayaking, canoeing, stand up paddle boarding) training or competition.

Examples 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' "down time" during a Special Olympics training, competition, or activity. This includes but is not limited to housing and activity locations such as hotels, dormitories, military base housing, private residences, parks, and host town accommodations.

## Safety Considerations for Swimming Training/Competition/Recreational

Special Olympics Kentucky has determined, for the health and welfare of its participants will restrict recreational swimming while under the auspices of Special Olympics. This applies not only to the time at Special Olympics competitions or activities, but also while in transit to/from Special Olympics competitions or activities. Any Local Program/Delegation wanting an exception to this policy **must comply** with the **Safety Considerations found in Section 5** of Special Olympics Swimming Rules or see Basic Rules, Emergency Action Plan and Personnel Requirements below.

All Special Olympics swimming training, recreational sessions and competition events shall be conducted in accordance with the following practices, rules and procedures in order to ensure the safety and well-being of all Special Olympics athletes, coaches and volunteers:

### Basic Rules

There shall be at least one certified lifeguard on duty for every 25 swimmers in the water. Lifeguards must be able to present proof of certification if requested.

The sole function of the lifeguard shall be to guard. If no relief lifeguard is available, the pool must be cleared, even for a short duration, when a lifeguard must leave the pool side. The Event Director will review the Emergency Action Plan prior to each occasion. There shall be enough coaches in accordance with FINA or program NGB guidelines.

Athlete medical history forms shall be on site and relevant information shall be discussed with the lifeguard or medical personnel on duty in advance of the aquatic activity.

Pool depths must be marked and easily visible.

## Emergency Action Plan

An Emergency Action Plan shall be in place prior to any Special Olympics participants entering the water for any reason, be it training, competition or recreation. The Emergency Action Plan should be written and reviewed by the staff on hand. The plan shall include the following:

The procedure for obtaining emergency medical support if a medical doctor, para-professional or medical support is not present.

The posts and areas of responsibilities for each lifeguard.

The procedure for obtaining weather information or weather watch information, particularly if the event is outside.

The procedure for reporting accidents.

The chain of command in case of a serious accident, including who is assigned to talk to the press.

The procedure for obtaining weather information particularly for Open Water swimming.

Other items as may be required by local Programs.

## Supervisory Personnel Requirements

An adequate number of supervisory personnel shall be present at all swimming sessions, events or recreational activities. The type of personnel will vary in accordance with the following requirements:

Recreational/Training/Competition Events:

**Enough certified lifeguards to provide a minimum ratio of guards to swimmers of 1 per 25.**

*Note: Special Olympics Kentucky programs must still adhere to the athlete/coach ratio of 4 to 1.*

*Athletes who are prone to seizures should have a minimum ratio of observer to swimmers of 1 to 2.*

1. This policy is effective when a Local Program assumes responsibility of a Special Olympics Kentucky athlete or any member of the delegation that is included on the roster. This would pertain to practices, competitions or any activity that involves swimming. If a parent/family member/caregiver brings an athlete or any member of the delegation to a training, competition or other activity – they must adhere to this policy as the member on the roster is attending a Special Olympics event.
2. If an individual or program violates this policy, they will receive a written warning for the first offense. If an individual or Local Program violates the policy after the written warning – the second offense repercussions will be disqualification from the competition. If a third offense occurs the Local Program or individual's repercussion will be banned from Special Olympics activities for 1 year. An individual who violates the second offense could potentially be sent home from training, competition, or activity at their or their legal guardian's expense.

## USA Games/World Games/National Games

Athletes will be allowed visits with family members (where they are removed from the delegation/team) but they will not be allowed to have overnight visits with the family members. While with family members recreational swimming **will not** be allowed during the time with a parent or legal guardian's temporary supervision of an athlete at a Special Olympics event or activity.