

How to Start a Unified Sports®

Team Checklist

1 Make contact with Special Olympics Colorado

- Set up a meeting
- Determine specific team needs and support roles for team
- Communicate with SOCO in regards to possible funding assistance

2 Choose the Sport

- SOCO designates these sports as a part of Project UNIFY within our schools:
 - Flag Football, Basketball, Soccer
- Outside of Project UNIFY SOCO offers these Unified Sports®:
 - Volleyball, Bowling and Softball

3 Find a Coach

- Be sure coaches complete the Coaches Training offered on the Special Olympics Colorado website within 1 year of becoming a coach
- Hold interest meeting at school to promote team
- Look for those who are passionate about the cause

4 Recruit Special Olympics Athletes

- Athletes are anyone who has an intellectual disability, of any ability level.
- Athletes also include people who have closely related intellectual disabilities, such as those who have functional limitations, both in general learning and in adaptive skills such as recreation, work, independent living, self-direction or self-care. Many eligible SO athletes may not be in ILC or Special Education Classrooms.
- Ask for permission to send a school-wide email with details about the program and contact information.
- Meet the Special Education staff in your school to help identify and recruit athletes.
- We strongly advise you to start small. It is much better to start out with just a few athletes with disabilities and then grow the program after success is evident.

5 Recruit Unified Partners

- Individuals without disabilities, interested in participating in the sport of your choice.
- Be sure to find an equal number of Partners and Athletes.
- Ideal Unified Partners might include members of Student Leadership or Student Government.
- It is also a good idea to look towards the students who were cut from JV or Varsity Athletic teams to be Unified Partners for the same sport.

6 Turn in your teams medical/consent forms (All master copies can be found at the end of this workbook, copy & distribute as needed- PLEASE RETURN ALL FORMS TOGETHER IN ONE PACKET TO Allo Perry AT SOCO OFFICE)

- Special Olympics Athletes must fill out *Application for Participation* (SOCO medical is valid for 3 years)- Must be signed by Medical professional before first practice
- Unified Partners must fill out *Special Olympics Colorado Class "A" Youth Volunteer Application* & return to SOCO office; All parts including copies of photo ID's, Protective Behavior Quizzes & Reference Forms must be included
- Unified Coach must fill out *Special Olympics Colorado Class "A" Adult Volunteer Application* & return to SOCO office
- Ensure school Principal has signed *Special Olympics Colorado Endorsement Letter*, this should already be completed if your school is actively involved with Project UNIFY.

7 Secure a facility and set team schedule

- Inform school Athletic Director of practice schedule and facility needs
- Develop a competition schedule with other League Coaches
- Provide SOCO with competition schedule
- Reserve buses if needed

8 Recruit Additional Volunteers

- Ask parents of athletes and partners if they would be willing to help out with practice etc.
- Look for team fundraising opportunities. Money can be used for uniforms, equipment, travel or team parties
- Add parents to your Booster Club

9 Hold regular practices and competitions

- Unified Sports® Teams should practice and compete similarly to any other high school team
- Be sure partners & athletes are recognized at your school's Athletic Awards Banquet or any sports assembly

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Participation in one SOCO event

- All schools must participate or attend a minimum of one Special Olympics Colorado Area or State Event/Competition
- Your Special Olympics Colorado Area Manager can provide you with details for these events

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Ongoing communication with school personnel & SOCO

- Set up meeting with coaches and SOCO staff if needed
- Ensure ongoing communication with Special Olympics Colorado