



# Special Olympics Minnesota Becoming a Coach

**Special  
Olympics**  
Minnesota



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## LEVEL I CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Level I certification can coach any sport.

### Volunteer application

- Fill out online or download a volunteer application.
- You will receive an email from [eservices@geninfo.com](mailto:eservices@geninfo.com) with a link to perform your background check. You must complete the background check in 5 business days before a new link needs to be sent.

### Background Check

#### Coaches

Area Level:

- Coaches who have not initiated the background check process prior to the Area Errors & Exceptions deadline will be scratched from competition.
- Coaches who have initiated but not passed the background check process prior to the Area Errors & Exceptions deadline can attend area competitions, but cannot be used to fulfill coach ratios.

State Level:

- Coaches who do not pass a background check prior to the State Errors & Exceptions deadline will be scratched from competition.

#### Unified Partners

- Unified Partners who have not passed a background check prior to the Area Errors & Exceptions deadline will be scratched from competition, also making them ineligible to advance to a higher level of competition during that sport season.

#### Athletes

Area Level:

- Athletes who have not initiated the background check process prior to the Area Errors & Exceptions deadline will be scratched from competition, also making them ineligible to advance to a higher level of competition during that sport season.
- Athletes who have initiated but not passed the background check process prior to the Area Errors & Exceptions deadline cannot attend Area competitions, but may be eligible to advance to a higher level of competition if results are returned prior to state Errors & Exceptions deadline.

State Level:

- Athletes who have not passed a background check prior to the State Errors & Exceptions deadline will be scratched from competition.

## **Protective Behavior, Concussion Training, and General Orientation Training (online level 1 training)**

- Complete the online training and quiz.
- This training must be updated every three years.

The volunteer application and Protective Behavior and General Orientation Training is found at <http://specialolympicsminnesota.org/get-involved/coaches/>

**All coaches working with athletes at a practice or competition need to be Level I certified.**

## **LEVEL II CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS**

Level II certification is valid for three years. Each Level II certification is sport specific.

- Complete Level I certification
- Attend a training school with classroom and clinician sessions, or take the online level 2 training for a sport.

**Coaches are Level II certified at the completion of the training school or after they have completed the online Level II sport quiz.**

## **LEVEL II RECERTIFICATION**

Level II training is valid for three years. Starting 2015, coaches may attend a level 2 training school, complete an online level 2 training, or submit a recertification course along with a sport-specific quiz online.

### **Recertification course**

- Attend a course and submit a certificate or card. Recertification courses can be one of the following:
  - ASEP Online Training (American Sports Education Program)
  - First Aid
  - Centers for Disease Control - Online Concussion Training
  - Leadership and LETR Conference
  - Continuing Education Course
  - Principles of Coaching
  - Crisis Prevention
  - Referee/Officiate a Special Olympics Event
  - CPR
  - Special Olympics Minnesota Online Sportsmanship Training
  - DAPE Course
  - Unified Sports Training
  - Fall or Spring Coaches Meeting
  - Other course that applies to working with Special Olympics

## Recertification quiz

Complete a recertification quiz for each sport a coach would like to get recertified in. The continuing education courses and recertification quizzes can be found online:

<http://specialolympicsminnesota.org/resources/coach-resources/continuing-education-courses/>

**Coaches that are Level II certified in multiple sports can become recertified in all those sports at the same time by attending one recertification course and completing a recertification quiz for each of the sports they are Level II certified in. This process will allow a coach to have the same certification date for all sports.**

## COACHES CERTIFICATION RATIO TABLES

### Individual Sports and Individual Skills

| Athletes | Level II | Level I |
|----------|----------|---------|
| 1-4      | 1        | 0       |
| 5-8      | 1        | 1       |
| 9-12     | 1        | 2       |
| 13-16    | 1        | 3       |
| 17-20    | 2        | 3       |
| 21-24    | 2        | 4       |
| 25-28    | 2        | 5       |
| 29-32    | 2        | 6       |
| 33-36    | 3        | 6       |
| 37-40    | 3        | 7       |
| 41-44    | 3        | 8       |
| 45-48    | 3        | 9       |
| 49-52    | 4        | 9       |
| 53-56    | 4        | 10      |
| 57-60    | 4        | 11      |
| 61-64    | 4        | 12      |
| 65-68    | 5        | 12      |
| 69-72    | 5        | 13      |
| 73-76    | 5        | 14      |
| 77-80    | 5        | 15      |
| 81-84    | 6        | 15      |
| 85-88    | 6        | 16      |
| 89-92    | 6        | 17      |
| 93-96    | 6        | 18      |
| 97-100   | 7        | 18      |

### Team Sports\*\*

Coach ratios for team sports are per team, not the total number of athletes registered

| Athletes | Level II | Level I |
|----------|----------|---------|
| 3-4      | 1        | 0       |
| 5-8      | 1        | 1       |
| 9-12     | 1        | 2       |
| 13-16    | 1        | 3       |

### Team Sport Roster Size

| Sport                            | Team  |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Half-Court Basketball            | 3-7   |
| Full-Court Basketball            | 5-16  |
| Unified Basketball               | 6-16  |
| Poly Hockey                      | 6-16  |
| Unified Flag Football            | 5-16  |
| Traditional & Unified Softball   | 10-16 |
| Traditional & Unified Volleyball | 6-16  |

\* Unified Individual Sports Coach Ratio: Delegations are allowed to count Unified Partners who are certified coaches toward their ratios provided that any delegation bringing more than one athlete to a competition has at least one Level II coach on site who is not playing and still meets the appropriate coach ratio. Coach ratios for individual skills must still be met by non-playing coaches.

\*\* Unified Team Sports ratios are the same as traditional team sports, teams still need one non-playing Level II coach on the bench at all times. Unified Partners will be included in coach ratio if they are 16 years of age or older.

## COACHES CODE OF CONDUCT

Special Olympics is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all coaches to honor sport and Special Olympics. All Special Olympics coaches agree to observe the following code:

### Respect for others and the organization

- I will respect the rights, dignity and worth of athletes, coaches, other volunteers, spectators and staff in Special Olympics.
- I will treat everyone equally regardless of gender, ethnic origin, religion, ability or sexual orientation.
- I will not promote religious or political beliefs or preferences while functioning in the capacity of a volunteer.
- I will be a positive role model for the athletes I coach.
- I will support and promote actions, opinions and philosophies that are consistent with Special Olympics Minnesota's mission and values.
- I will not willfully or maliciously damage the property or reputation of Special Olympics Minnesota.

### Ensure a positive experience

- I will ensure that for each athlete I coach, the time spent with Special Olympics is a positive experience.
- I will respect the talent, developmental stage and goals of each athlete.
- I will ensure each athlete competes in events that challenge that athlete's potential and are appropriate to that athlete's ability.
- I will be fair, considerate and honest with athletes and communicate with athletes using simple, clear language.
- I will ensure that accurate scores are provided for entry of an athlete into any event.
- I will instruct each athlete to perform to the best of the athlete's ability at all preliminaries and final heats in accordance with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules.

### Act professionally and take responsibility for my actions

- My language, manner, punctuality, preparation and presentation will demonstrate high standards.
- I will display control, respect, dignity and professionalism to all involved in the sport (athletes, coaches, opponents, officials, administrators, parents, spectators, media, etc.).
- I will encourage athletes to demonstrate the same qualities.
- I will not smoke in restricted areas, take illegal drugs or misuse prescription drugs while representing Special Olympics at training sessions, competitions or activities, or while in transit to training sessions, competitions or activities.
- I will have knowledge of, and will abide by, the policies of Special Olympics Minnesota as outlined in the Special Olympics Minnesota Program Administration Guide.
- I have specifically read and will abide by the Special Olympics Minnesota Alcohol Policy outlined in the Special Olympics Minnesota Program Administration Guide.



- Depending on my position within each sport, I will alert my Head Coach, Head of Delegation or Special Olympics Minnesota staff to report actions by athletes or other volunteers contrary to the Codes of Conduct.
- I will refrain from any form of personal abuse towards athletes and others, including inappropriate or unwanted sexual advances on others, verbal, physical and emotional abuse.
- I will not act in a way that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for athletes, coaches, volunteers, staff or spectators.
- I will be alert to any form of abuse from other sources directed toward athletes in my care.
- I will abide by the Special Olympics policy on the prohibition of coaches dating athletes.

### **Quality service to the athletes**

- I will seek continual improvement through performance evaluation and ongoing coach education.
- I will be knowledgeable about the Sports Rules and skills of the sport(s) I coach.
- I will provide a plan for a regular training program.
- I will keep copies of the medical, training and competition records for each athlete I coach.
- I will follow the Special Olympics Sports Rules for my sport(s).

### **Health and safety of the athletes**

- I will ensure that the equipment and facilities are safe to use.
- I will ensure that the equipment, rules, training and the environment are appropriate for the age and ability of the athletes.
- I will review each athlete's medical form and be aware of any limitations on that athlete's participation noted on that form.
- I will encourage athletes to seek medical advice when required.
- I will maintain the same interest and support toward sick and injured athletes.
- I will allow further participation in training and competition only when appropriate.

### **Sportsmanship**

Good sportsmanship is both the coach's and athlete's commitment to fair play, ethical behavior and integrity. In perception and practice, sportsmanship is defined as those qualities which are characterized by generosity and genuine concern for others. Below we highlight a few focus points and ideas on how to teach and coach sportsmanship to your athletes. Lead by example.

### **Competitive effort**

- Put forth maximum effort during each event.
- Practice the skills with the same intensity as you would perform them in competition.
- Always finish a match/event: Never quit.

### **Fair play at all times**

- Always comply with the rules.
- Demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play at all times.
- Respect the decision of the officials at all times.

I understand that if I violate this Code of Conduct I will be subject to a range of consequences, up to, and including, being prohibited from coaching Special Olympics.

## SPECIAL OLYMPICS MINNESOTA MISSION & PHILOSOPHY

### Structure of Special Olympics Minnesota

Special Olympics Minnesota is an accredited state program of Special Olympics, Incorporated based in Washington, D.C. Special Olympics Minnesota is governed by a Board of Directors whose essential functions are policy making, assuring sound management of the organization, increasing public awareness and actively participating in fundraising. The Special Olympics Minnesota staff is responsible for carrying out the daily activities and operations of the organization on a statewide level and providing support and direction to volunteers.

### Mission of Special Olympics Minnesota

Special Olympics Minnesota offers children and adults with intellectual disabilities year-round sports training and competition. Through Special Olympics' athletic, health and leadership programs, people with intellectual disabilities transform themselves, their communities and the world.

### Values of Special Olympics Minnesota

**Respect:** Valuing and accepting human differences and the unique abilities of all people in our communities.

**Accomplishment:** Celebrating the fulfillment of individual potential.

**Choice:** Providing opportunities for self-determination.

**Quality:** Striving for excellence in all we do.

**Partnership:** Achieving more than we can alone by collaborating with others.

**Integrity:** Fostering a culture based on the highest standards of personal and professional principles.

### Special Olympics Athlete Oath

Let me win.

But if I cannot win,

Let me be brave in the attempt.

## **SPECIAL OLYMPICS ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW**

### **Special Olympics, Incorporated (SOI)**

Special Olympics, Incorporated (SOI) is based in Washington, D.C. The essential functions of SOI are policy making, assuring sound management of the organization, increasing public awareness and actively participating in fundraising.

SOI is also responsible for the development of the sports that are offered, the events within those sports, and the rules for each sport. SOI also offers World Games every two years and U.S. National Games every four years.

### **Special Olympics Minnesota**

Special Olympics Minnesota is an accredited state program of Special Olympics, Incorporated (SOI).

#### **Sports Offered:**

Winter Sports: Alpine Skiing, Snowboarding, Powerlifting and Poly Hockey

Summer Sports: Basketball, Gymnastics, Swimming and Track & Field

Fall Sports: Bocce, Equestrian, Golf, Softball, and Tennis

Unified Flag Football

Bowling

**State Competitions:** Winter Games, Summer Games, Fall Games, Equestrian, Unified Flag Football and State Bowling

**Regional Competitions:** Regional Basketball and Softball

#### **2018 Special Olympics Minnesota numbers at a glance:**

Athletes: 8,000

Volunteers: 10,000+

Staff: 40

Competitions: 100+

## Areas

To provide assistance in facilitating local training and providing area level competition, the state is divided into 13 Area programs. Each of these Areas is managed by a volunteer Area Coordinator and their Area Sports Management Team (ASMT), whose general direction and support is provided by a state office staff Sports Program Manager. Areas hold their own competitions prior to a regional or state competition.

## AREA MAP 2018

### AREAS 1, 2 & 3

#### DANI DRUSE

PROGRAM ASSOCIATE  
dani.druse@somn.org | 701.721.5635

*Kittson, Mahanomen, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, Roseau, Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Lake of the Woods, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, Pine, St. Louis*

### AREAS 7 & 13

#### EMILY GARNESS

PROGRAM MANAGER  
emily.garness@somn.org | 763.270.7179

*Benton, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Sherburne, Stearns, Wright, Anoka, Chisago, Washington, Ramsey*

### AREAS 4, 5, 6 & 8

#### LEAH WOLKOW

PROGRAM MANAGER  
leah.wolkow@somn.org | 320.760.7053

*Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, Wilkin, Aitkin, Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd, Wadena, Big Stone, Chippewa, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, McLeod, Meeker, Renville, Swift, Yellow Medicine, Cottonwood, Jackson, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Rock*

### AREAS 9 & 10

#### ZAK ARMSTRONG

PROGRAM MANAGER  
zak.armstrong@somn.org | 763.270.7173

*Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, Watonwan, Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, Winona*

### AREA 11

#### SAM LEIDHOLT

PROGRAM MANAGER  
sam.leidholt@somn.org | 763.270.7178

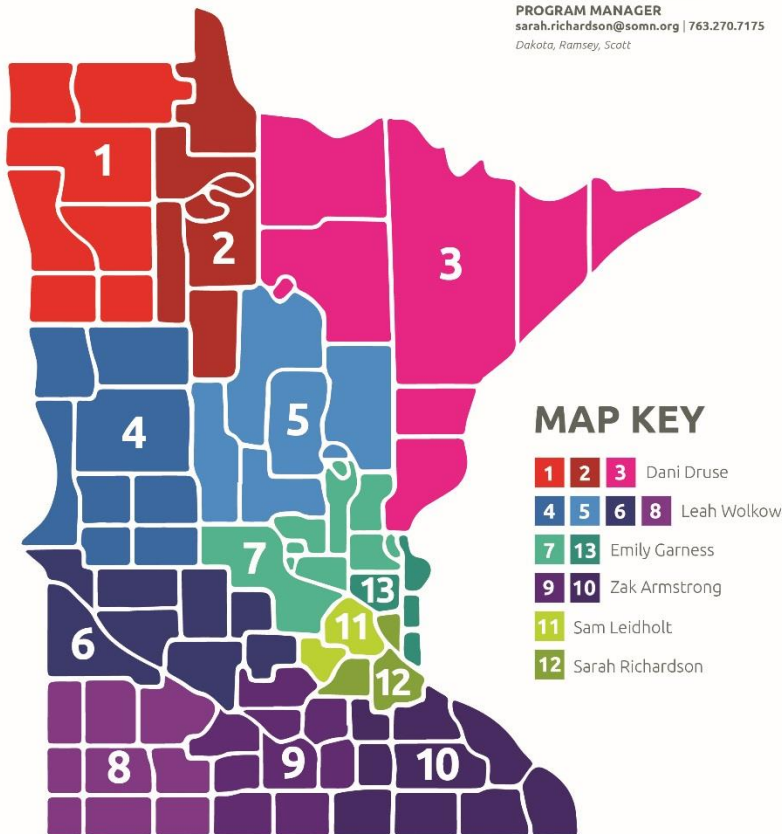
*Carver, Hennepin*

### AREA 12

#### SARAH RICHARDSON

PROGRAM MANAGER  
sarah.richardson@somn.org | 763.270.7175

*Dakota, Ramsey, Scott*



## Current Program Managers

- Areas 1, 2 & 3: dani.druse@somn.org
- Area 4, 5, 6 & 8: leah.wolkow@somn.org
- Area 7 & 13: emily.dierberger@somn.org
- Areas 9 & 10: zak.armstrong@somn.org
- Area 11: sam.leidholt@somn.org
- Area 12: sarah.richardson@somn.org

## Delegations

Within each area there are delegations led by a Head of Delegation. Each Delegation is unique in the number of athletes that they serve, the sports they offer and the way they are structured. Each Delegation chooses which sports they compete in and how many athletes or teams they have.

## **ATHLETE ELIGIBILITY AND REGISTRATION**

Each athlete involved in Special Olympics Minnesota must be registered at the State Office prior to participating in training or competition.

Participation in Special Olympics Minnesota training and competition is open to all persons with an intellectual disability who meet the age requirements, regardless of the level or degree of that person's disability, and whether or not that person also has physical disabilities, so long as that person registers to participate in Special Olympics Minnesota. There is no maximum age limitation for participation in Special Olympics. The minimum age limitation for participation in Special Olympics competitions is 8 years of age. Children who are at least 6 years old may be permitted to participate in age-appropriate Special Olympics training programs, or in specific cultural or social activities offered during the course of a Special Olympics Minnesota event.

A person is considered to have an intellectual disability for purposes of determining eligibility in Special Olympics if that person satisfies any one of the following requirements:

- The person has been identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability as determined by their localities; or
- The person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures such as IQ testing or other measures that are generally accepted within the professional community as being a reliable measurement of the existence of a cognitive delay; or
- The person has a closely related developmental disability, defined as functional limitations in both general learning (such as IQ) and in adaptive skills (see AAMR definition below). However, persons whose functional limitations are based solely on a physical, behavioral or emotional disability, or a specific learning or sensory disability, are not eligible to participate as Special Olympics athletes.

### **Athlete application for participation in Special Olympics**

Also known as an "Athlete Medical," each athlete participating in Special Olympics Minnesota must have a current medical form on file at the State Office. To satisfy insurance requirements, this form must be submitted to the State Office before an athlete begins training. Once submitted, this form needs to be resubmitted every three years from the medical exam date.

### **Athlete consent form**

Another form needed on file for each athlete. This form only needs to be completed once, unless the athlete enters Special Olympics Minnesota under the age of 18. Athletes younger than 18 should complete a new form once they reach the age of 18. This form must be submitted to the State Office, along with the Athlete Application, before an athlete begins training.

## DIVISIONING

Divisioning is the process used to establish competitive competitions against others with the same skill level and ability. Divisions are based on skill level, age and gender. Individual sports and team sports each have a different process for divisioning.

### Individual sports

Individual sports have measurable times, distances and scores. These concrete scores allow for the creation of divisions with athletes who have similar scores. Divisions for individual sports are created using the qualifying scores that athletes retain from a practice season. Coaches should keep records of how an athlete does throughout the training season so that their practice qualifying score can be used for appropriate divisioning at a competition.

### Team sports

The divisioning process for team sports is much different, and much harder, than individual sports. Unlike most individual sports, team sports do not have concrete distances or times that can be used, although we do have teams submit assessment scores for individual players. Once a game starts, however, the information contained in the assessments often takes a back seat to the dynamics at play minute-by-minute, play-by-play on the court or field.

The challenge with divisioning team sports is that there are many factors that affect how a team performs on any given day — missing players, illness, penalties, behavior, coaching, who's hot and who's not, individual match-ups, etc. With divisioning in team sports, much more emphasis is put on game results, common opponents, coach rankings and coach notes. There is not a perfect science to ensure that all divisions will have close games, which is why we have developed a process for team sports that includes divisioning committees. The divisioning committees allow for more coach involvement, better team evaluation and improved divisioning. We recognize there may be some games during a competition that are not competitive, but we hope that the team sports divisioning process creates the most equal divisions possible.

To help put team divisioning in Special Olympics in context, let's take a quick look at other sports organizations. Most other sports organizations, whether high school, college or pro, go through a series of eliminations to find the top two teams to play each other for a championship. Given the nature of those tournament formats, the goal of which is to eliminate the competition and single out the "best" two teams of sometimes hundreds of teams, one would expect their championship games to be extremely competitive and tight. But they seldom play out that way because of all the same variables and factors mentioned above in what makes divisioning difficult for Special Olympics.

Our goal is always that teams within a division are as competitive as they can be with each other, but as illustrated above, the dynamics of team sports don't always play out that way. And even if games within a division are all competitive, a team still has to win and a team still has to lose the division.

## INITIATIVES

### **Athlete Leadership Programs (ALPs)**

Athletes Leadership Programs (ALPs) are defined as the following:

- Allowing athletes to choose how, and in what role, they participate in Special Olympics, such as athlete, coach, volunteer and/or leader
- Encouraging athletes to take meaningful positions of influence and leadership throughout the organization to help determine policy and direction
- Providing additional training for athletes as they develop their leadership skills in new roles
- Allowing athletes to explore opportunities for participation in roles previously considered “non-traditional.” Through ALPs, athletes are trained to serve as public speakers, assistant coaches, volunteers and to gain knowledge about the responsibilities of becoming an effective board or committee member.

ALPs courses include Athletes as Coaches, Athletes as Volunteers, Challenges Through Choice and Global Messenger. Each athlete who gets involved in ALPs needs a mentor as a partner who can attend the courses with them.

### **Healthy Athletes®**

The mission of Healthy Athletes® is to improve athletes’ ability to train and compete in Special Olympics. Athletes receive a variety of free health screenings and services in a series of clinics conducted in a welcoming, fun environment. Healthy Athletes notifies athletes if follow-up care is needed and refers athletes to community providers when necessary.

Healthy Athletes screenings include Fit Feet, FUNfitness, Health Promotion, Healthy Hearing, Medfest, Opening Eyes® and Special Smiles®.

### **SoFit**

Special Olympics Minnesota’s SOfit health promotion program is a Unified approach to improving and protecting health and wellness for people with and without intellectual disabilities. SOfit offers participants a comprehensive, 360-degree look at wellness and the human spirit. Together, athletes and Unified partners are empowered to challenge and change the way they look at diet, daily exercise and lifestyle choices.

### **Polar Plunge**

The Polar Plunge — presented by Minnesota law enforcement as part of the year-round Law Enforcement Torch Run® events to benefit Special Olympics — is a great opportunity for delegations to raise money. Delegations that take the Polar Bear Plunge are able to receive 50% of the funds that they raise. For more information, visit [plungemn.org](http://plungemn.org).

## **R-word: Spread the Word to End the Word**

Spread the Word to End the Word™ is a national movement to stop the use of the detrimental use of the word retard/retarded. Thousands have taken the pledge to stop their use of this word and encourage others to do the same. To learn more about Spread the Word to End the Word™ visit <http://www.r-word.org/>.

## **Summer Sports Camp**

Summer Sports Camp offers athletes, ages 8 through adult, an opportunity to build skills and friendships through a four-day, three-night overnight camp. The camp was specially designed to be an environment of encouragement and acceptance that fosters campers' personal growth as they train and showcase their individual talents and skills in a sporting event of their choice. In 2012, Summer Sports Camp includes a one-day Young Athletes Day Camp for children ages 2–7.

## **Unified Sports**

Unified Sports mix athletes with and without disabilities on the same team and/or relay. Unified Sports athletes and partners improve their physical fitness, sharpen their skills, challenge the competition and help to overcome prejudices about intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics Minnesota currently offers Unified events in basketball, bocce, bowling, flag football, golf, gymnastics, softball, swimming, tennis, track & field and volleyball.

## **Wilderness Inquiry**

Wilderness Inquiry offers a wilderness camping experience for athletes. The program typically takes place in August. Past trips have included canoeing and camping on the St. Croix River and the Apostle Islands.

## **Young Athletes**

Young Athletes is an innovative, inclusive sports play program for children ages 2–7 with and without intellectual disabilities, designed to introduce them to the world of sports prior to Special Olympics eligibility at age 8. The program was started in Minnesota in 2010 with just a few programs and has been growing ever since. Currently, there are 30+ programs operating across the state.



## USA GAMES AND WORLD GAMES ELIGIBILITY

Special Olympics Minnesota is given a quota for the sports and maximum number of athletes that we can bring to USA Games or World Games. In certain sports we are also given certain levels to fill, which then narrows the selection within sports to specific events. The sports, levels and athletes that we receive are determined by Special Olympics Inc. for World Games and Special Olympics North America for USA Games. Once a quota has been established, an application process is held for eligible athletes. An athlete is eligible for USA Games or World Games if they receive a gold medal at a qualifying state competition in a sport for which we received quota. Typically our qualifying events are a year before each higher-level competition, but sometimes due to deadlines it can be two years before the event.

It is our philosophy that higher-level opportunities such as this should be afforded to as many Minnesota athletes as possible; therefore, if all other things are equal among athletes who are eligible and apply, we will select an athlete who has not previously had a competition experience outside of Minnesota.

### USA Games

#### **2006 – Ames, Iowa**

Team Minnesota competed in aquatics, athletics, basketball, bowling, golf, gymnastics, powerlifting and softball

84 athletes, 21 coaches

#### **2010 – Lincoln, Nebraska**

Team Minnesota competed in aquatics, athletics, basketball, bocce, bowling, golf, gymnastics, softball and Unified volleyball

86 athletes, 22 coaches, 3 unified partners

#### **2014 – Princeton, New Jersey**

#### **2018 – Seattle, Washington**

### World Games

**2009 Winter Games** – Boise, Idaho

**2011 Summer Games** – Athens, Greece

**2013 Winter Games** – Pyeong Chang, South Korea

**2015 Summer Games** - Los Angeles, California

**2017 Winter Games** - Graz, Austria

**2019 Summer Games** – Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates