

Rapid City Flame Welcome Packet



Welcome to Rapid City Flame!

Welcome to Special Olympics South Dakota – Rapid City Flame! We are delighted that you have chosen to join thousands of other athletes, coaches, volunteers, and families throughout South Dakota to participate in year-round sports training and friendly athletic competitions in a variety of sports. A delegation of over 450 Flame athletes, Unified partners, coaches, and volunteers participate in an increasing number of sports and opportunities. Participants from Rapid City and all of its surrounding communities provide a positive and fun experience for athletes and their families.

Special Olympics is a global movement whose goal is to create a world of inclusion and community, where every person is accepted and welcomed, regardless of ability or disability. Athletes develop character, skills, and friendships, and above all else, have fun. Everyone is a winner!

Thank you for participating with Special Olympics South Dakota - Rapid City Flame!
We could not succeed without your hard work and dedication!

Program Coordinator – Yvette Lassegard

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Email: coaches@rcflame.org

Website: www.rcflame.org

Communications

We communicate via email and Facebook. If you register with us, you are automatically added to our email distribution list. Emails are always posted on our Facebook page, “Rapid City Flame Special Olympics”. On our website, www.rcflame.org, you will find our calendar and you may sign up for our Newsletter.

Rapid City Flame Mission and Sports

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.

Rapid City Flame is a delegation for youth and young adults interested in participating in practices, tournaments, and special events. We currently offer the following sports:

- Athletics (Track & Field)
- Basketball & Unified Basketball
- Bocce & Unified Bocce
- Bowling & Unified Bowling
- Alpine Skiing
- Soccer & Unified Soccer
- Golf
- Softball & Unified Softball
- Swimming



What are Unified Sports?

Join the Inclusion Revolution! Unified Sports is a Special Olympics initiative that brings people with and without intellectual disabilities (Unified Partners) together on the same team to compete. Rapid City Flame is an inclusion leader in South Dakota and has expanded its basketball, softball, soccer, bowling, and bocce teams to include friends and relatives of similar abilities and ages. Unified teams provide training and competition opportunities that meaningfully challenge and involve all athletes and partners. Special Olympics sports rules ensure that everyone will have a fair and enjoyable competitive experience.

How Do I Become a Volunteer or Unified Partner?

Special Olympics provides meaningful volunteer opportunities. You will meet people, share ideas, master skills and make a difference in the lives of our athletes. Special Olympics would not exist without the time, energy, dedication, and commitment of the more than 1.4 million Special Olympics volunteers worldwide.

Specific areas where we need and value your assistance:

- Volunteer at Rapid City Flame practices and games.
- Help coaches measure times and measure skills for athlete registration.
- Help athletes learn the basic rules and skills of their sport.
- Help athletes stay focused on their tasks.
- Play on Unified Sports® teams and provide real-time support.
- Serve as a certified Special Olympics coach.
- Encourage members of your civic groups to volunteer their professional services to Special Olympics programs and events.
- Participate in or donate to one of our fundraising events (e.g., Polar Plunge).

Your first step to volunteer is simple: just show up, or call, and introduce yourself! By coming to a practice, you'll be able to see firsthand what we do. We'll supply you with all the necessary forms, including a Volunteer-Unified Partner Application that must be completed and updated every three years. For more information, email coaches@rcflame.org.

How Did Special Olympics International Get Started?

Special Olympics was founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who was concerned that children with intellectual disabilities had little opportunity to participate in athletic events. The inaugural International Special Olympics Games were held that year, at Soldier Field in Chicago, hosting three countries and 1,000 athletes. In 1971, the U.S. Olympic Committee gave the Special Olympics official approval to use the name "Olympics," making them the only organization to receive permission. Today, Special Olympics serves over 5 million athletes worldwide.



How Do I Become an Athlete?

Athletes are the heart and soul of Special Olympics. Competition brings together children with intellectual disabilities and provides them with the opportunity to learn new skills, make lasting friendships, and gain confidence – all while having fun! We welcome participants of all ability levels throughout the Black Hills region. We hold practices in the Rapid City area and participate in regional, state, and national competitions sponsored by Special Olympics South Dakota. To participate in regional and state tournaments, athletes must participate for the entire 8-week sport season (exceptions granted by Flame Coordinator for illnesses and family emergencies).

Becoming an athlete is simple. Eligible participants must have an intellectual disability, be at least 8 years old, and possess an Individualized Education Program (IEP). There are other cases in which an individual is eligible, as well. Please email any questions to coaches@rcflame.org. Each athlete must have a completed Athlete Registration Form, including a physician signature prior to participation. Bring the completed form to any practice or mail it to PO Box 9780, Rapid City, SD 57709. Registration Forms are valid for three years.

Time Sensitive: Athlete Registration Forms must be turned in by the third practice of the season. After the third practice, athletes who have not registered will not be eligible to practice with the team.

That's it! Just turn in your registration form, come to a practice, and you are signed up!

What Skills Do I Need To Be An Athlete?

Athletes in every sport and event are grouped by age, gender, and ability – giving everyone a reasonable chance to win. For each event, athletes will compete against others of similar age and skill. All athletes are welcome regardless of skill level.

At Special Olympics there are no World Records because each athlete, whether in the fastest or slowest division, is valued and recognized equally. In every division, all athletes receive an award, from gold, silver, and bronze medals, to fourth through eighth place ribbons. This idea of equal ability groupings is the foundation for competition in Special Olympics and is seen at all events. Each athlete is recognized for their performance and doing their best, by teammates, family, friends, and fans.

Do I Get a Uniform?

We distribute uniforms prior to each competition. Uniforms must be returned at the conclusion of each competition.



Do Flame Athletes Earn a High School Letter?

Participation in Rapid City Flame provides athletes with an opportunity to earn a school letter and letterman jacket from their home school. See the Program Coordinator for more information on this program.

What Competitions Are Available for Each Sport?

Each sports season consists of practices, area competitions, and state tournaments.

Black Hills Area Competitions

Our athletes attend Black Hills Area regional competitions, usually held in Rapid City or Spearfish. We automatically register all athletes for these events; however, we understand that illness, family emergencies, and other situations that may require an absence do occur. Please notify your Key Volunteer as soon as possible in the event that your athlete will be absent from an area competition. Attendance at the Black Hills Area competition is mandatory if an athlete wishes to attend the state tournament. In the event of an unavoidable conflict (e.g., illness, funeral), an exception may be granted by the Program Coordinator.

Special Olympics South Dakota State Competitions

Special Olympics South Dakota state tournaments are held in either eastern or western South Dakota. Athletes and families planning on attending state tournaments must notify the sport's Key Volunteer within 3 weeks of the first practice. If you aren't 100 percent certain your athlete will attend, please go ahead and advise the Key Volunteer that you plan to attend. The deadline cutoff for registration is strictly enforced by Special Olympics South Dakota; once this date has passed it is impossible to add an athlete. Withdrawing from the tournament is allowed.

Athletes May Travel to State Tournaments with Families and Caregivers

You may attend state tournaments with your athlete, if they are registered in advance. If your plans change, notify the Key Volunteer as soon as possible. You are responsible for your own transportation and lodging accommodations. In cases of financial hardship, there may be some scholarship funds available – check with the Program Coordinator.



Some Athletes May Travel to State Tournaments with the Team

A select number of athletes may travel with the team to state tournaments. Athletes wishing to travel with the team must have the Program Director's approval and meet the following criteria:

- Independent in daily living skills and self-care.
- Follows directions.
- Shows respect, kindness, and courtesy toward volunteers, coaching staff, chaperones, and other athletes.
- Practices good sportsmanship on and off the playing field (including the bus, hotel, restaurants, etc.).
- Does not wander and will stay in a designated area, without supervision, for short periods of time.

Other requirements for traveling with the team may apply; these will vary by sport and are based on event location (distance from Rapid City) and availability of team volunteers and chaperones.

Volunteers, Chaperones and Unified Partners Traveling to State Events

Our volunteers, chaperones and Unified Partners make trips to State Events possible for the team. These trips are fun because everyone contributes to their success. Here are general guidelines for participants:

- I will be available, as needed, when on trips. I will be responsible for ensuring all athletes assigned to me are up, attending meals, and on time to all events.
- I will enforce "lights out" and "room in" times and ensure the "no co-ed visitation" rule is strictly adhered to.
- I will ensure any athlete at the hotel is accompanied by a chaperone at all times. If an athlete becomes ill and must remain in bed during activities, a chaperone will be designated to stay in close proximity to the ill student in case medical attention is needed. In the event of a trip to the emergency room, the Head Coach and/or Head Chaperone will be notified, and the accompanying chaperone will be given access to that athlete's medical release forms.
- I will defer to the Head Chaperone for all duties, times, and responsibilities, and understand that the needs of the delegation take priority over a chaperone's needs.
- If I disagree with something on the trip, I will bring it up privately with the appropriate person. Behavior or non-compliance issues will be handled by the Program Coordinator. At no time will an athlete be corrected privately one-on-one. If there is a need to deal with an issue regarding an athlete of the opposite gender, another person of the same gender as the athlete will be present.



Codes of Conduct

Special Olympics is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all who participate to honor the values outlined in the Codes of Conduct.

Athlete Code of Conduct

- I will practice good sportsmanship.
- I will act in ways that bring respect to me, my coaches, my team, and Special Olympics.
- I will learn and follow the rules of my sport and train regularly.
- I will listen to my coaches and officials and ask questions when I do not understand.
- I will not swear or insult other people.
- I will not make inappropriate or unwanted physical, verbal, or sexual advances on others.
- I will not drink alcohol, smoke, or take illegal drugs while representing Special Olympics during training sessions, competitions, or games.
- I will not take drugs to enhance my performance.

Family Members, Caregivers & Guardians Code of Conduct

- I will let my athlete choose the sport(s) in which he/she would like to participate.
- I will ensure my athlete's medical form is up to date, complete, and on file.
- I will learn the rules of the game and Special Olympics policies. If I wish to protest, I will meet with the Program Coordinator at an agreed-upon time and place.
- I will refrain from coaching my athlete unless I am the assigned coach.
- I will teach my athlete to play by the rules and resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility or violence.
- I will provide for the health and safety of all athletes by reporting suspicious behavior, talking to my child about personal safety, dropping off and picking up my child from Special Olympics events only during times designated by the organization, and taking any other reasonable measures to assist in the protection of athletes.



Coach, Volunteer, and Unified Partner Code of Conduct

- I will abide by the Special Olympics prohibition on dating athletes.
- I will respect the talent, developmental stage, and goals of each athlete, and ensure everybody enjoys a positive experience.
- I will ensure each athlete competes in events that challenge their potential and are appropriate for their ability.
- I will instruct each athlete to perform to the best of their ability during all preliminaries and final heats in accordance with the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules.
- I will be fair, considerate, and honest with athletes and communicate using simple, clear language.
- I will ensure accurate scores are provided for entry of an athlete into any event.
- I will seek continual personal improvement through performance evaluations and ongoing education.
- Coaches - I will have a thorough knowledge of the rules and skills of the sport(s) I coach and will develop a plan for a regular training program.
- Coaches - I will be aware of any limitations on an athlete's participation, encouraging them to seek medical advice when required.
- I will maintain the same interest and support toward sick and injured athletes as those who are healthy and will allow further participation in training and competition only when appropriate.

Sportsmanship Code of Conduct

- I understand that in order to compete at State events, all athletes must play at the area level first.
- I will practice good sportsmanship at all times by displaying kindness, respect, courtesy, punctuality, and positive support for all athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, and spectators during practices and competitions.
- I will remember that athletes participate to have fun and will emphasize that all athletes are winners, offering praise for competing fairly and trying their best.
- I will prioritize skill development and practices over competition, promoting the emotional and physical well-being of the athletes over winning.
- I will respect the official and their coach's authority and will never question or confront them during competitions or games.
- I will refrain from engaging in any type of unsportsmanlike conduct toward athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, and spectators.
- I will alert delegation staff to any form of abuse I witness.
- I will attend all team events including Opening Ceremonies, Competitions, Banquets, Dances, etc., unless granted an exception.