

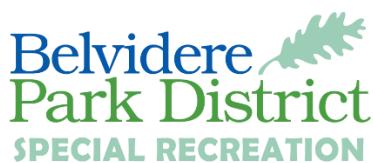
BELVIDERE PARK DISTRICT SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETE/PARENT HANDBOOK

PIRATES SPECIAL OLYMPICS 2025-2026



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WELCOME TO BELVIDERE PARK DISTRICT SPECIAL RECREATION SPECIAL OLYMPICS!

Whether this is your first season or you have participated with us for many years, we thank you for joining us for the 2025 – 2026 season. As we continue to grow, we thank our families for the continued support and involvement in our sports.

Belvidere Park District (BPD) Special Recreation and Region A Special Olympics (SO) provide year round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports. These sports are for children and adults with intellectual and physical disabilities – giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in the sharing of skills, and creating friendships with other SO athletes, and the community.

Our program began in 2008 with limited sports opportunities and has grown to include 8 different sports: basketball, bocce, bowling, flag football, snowshoe, softball, track & field, and volleyball. Now serving over 60 athletes, BPD Special Recreation continues to provide ways for aspiring athletes to enhance and develop their skills and competitive spirit. It is our goal that each of our athletes strive for greatness.

The goal of the Parent/Athlete handbook is to annually provide key information to our SO athletes and families; including any recent changes to SO rules of competition. Please feel free to contact me with your questions, concerns, and suggestions by utilizing the information below. We are excited to share in your competition victories with you throughout the next year!

Let's bring home the gold!



Gina Ruvalcaba, SOAD

Email: gruvalcaba@belviderepark.org

Special Recreation Supervisor

Belvidere Park District/NASR

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GENERAL STATEMENT OF ATHLETE ELIGIBILITY

SO training and competition is open to every person with intellectual and physical disabilities who is at least eight years of age and registers to participate in SO Illinois through a regional team.

ATHLETE AGE REQUIREMENTS

There is no maximum age limitation for participation in SO. The minimum age requirement for participation in SO competition is eight (8) years of age.

Participants under the age of eight (8) years old may register for individual sports. These athletes will be able to begin their athletic training by practicing weekly on the developmental skills of the sport. They will be unable to compete in a SO event, but may be entered in practice tournaments/competitions if approved by the host organization. These sports include; bocce, track, bowling, basketball & softball skills, swimming, & snowshoe. A parent/adult must remain in attendance at practice with individuals under 8 years old and may be asked to assist with their athlete when necessary.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS MEDICAL APPLICATION & CONSENT

We are thrilled to share that the Belvidere Park District Special Recreation is now using the Special Olympics Illinois **Digital Center of Excellence (COE)**! As of **October 21, 2025**, our agency began using this new platform for athlete registration, Health History updates, required forms, and roster management.

Here's what this means for you:

- **Create Parent/Guardian Account:** All athletes or parents/guardians will need to create an account on the new portal by visiting <https://portals.specialolympics.org/>. This initial account will have all of the PARENT/GUARDIAN information; **after creating your account**, you will register your athlete within YOUR portal. When creating **YOUR** account, please ensure that you select **Region A and then hit the + and select NASR-Belvidere**.
 - Once your account is created, you'll be able to add athlete(s) and complete their "Checklist," which includes:
 - **Health History & Release Form**
 - **Athlete Acknowledgment Form**
 - To help make this process easier, check out the [step-by-step guide](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vnf9IiOT5kWbgdswmAGzC9XbCiOeLxgV/view) to walk you through creating your profile and adding your athlete(s). <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vnf9IiOT5kWbgdswmAGzC9XbCiOeLxgV/view>
- **New Health History Policy:** Medical Forms will no longer be required or accepted. Instead, a Health History Form, signed by the athlete or parent/guardian, will now be the standard for athletes participating in Regional and State Events. **A doctor's signature is no longer necessary for these forms.**
 - However, as of January 1, 2026, if you answer yes to the following questions below, the athlete will need to obtain a doctor's signature on a generated medical form:
 - Has the athlete had a concussion in the last 30 days? You will be prompted to enter the date.
 - Has a doctor ever limited your participation in sports? You will be prompted to enter which specific sports they are restricted in participating.
 - Answer "yes" only if a doctor has placed long-term or ongoing restrictions on your ability to participate in sports due to a medical condition. Temporary limitations such as being told not to play while recovering from an injury do not count.
- **More Control for Families & Coaches:** The new platform gives parents, guardians, coaches, and volunteers the ability to manage profiles directly. Once your profile is created, you'll have the flexibility to update athlete information and complete forms in real time.

The SO **Health History & Release Form** is a form that must be completed **annually**. Applications must be current through state competition of each sport. Refer to page 8 for season schedule.

The SO **Athlete Acknowledgement Form** must be signed by the athlete (or parent/legal guardian). This form is valid for the duration of an athlete's participation in SO Illinois, unless guardianship status changes.

ADDITIONAL ATHLETE PAPERWORK FOR AGENCY

- All athletes must complete the online **ePACT** information collection process. Upon registration, athletes will receive an email prompting them to update their information through ePACT. This information must be completed prior to the first night of practice. If something changes throughout the season, simply go to your account and update the information in real time.
- If applicable, athletes who have a seizure disorder must have a **Seizure Action Plan** completed and signed by a doctor. If no plan is on file, staff will call 911 each time an athlete has a seizure.
- If applicable, athletes who require medication dispensing during extended program times, must complete a **Medication Administration Form**. More information about medication dispensing can be found on page 12.
- Depending on state qualification, athletes may need additional paperwork completed in order to participate.

REGULAR SEASON TRAINING SCHEDULE

- Practices will typically be held once a week during an 8-16 week season.
 - 8 weeks Bocce, Track & Field, Bowling, Softball & Basketball Skills, Snowshoe, Flag Football & Volleyball
 - 12 weeks Softball
 - 14 weeks Basketball
- A season schedule will be handed out on the 1st practice of each season and a copy will be sent via Remind and email on file. Changes to schedules will be communicated as they occur.
 - Team Sports: BPD-Special Recreation attempts to organize/schedule games with other SO teams before or as early in the season as possible. These games may be scheduled for an alternate night or weekend, depending on team and facility availability. Please be flexible and considerate as we do our best to make the most fulfilling season.

EXTENDED SEASON SCHEDULE FOR STATE QUALIFIERS

- Bocce & Track & Field, Snowshoe Practices will resume two weeks prior to state competition.
Basketball & Softball Skills
- Softball, Volleyball, Basketball Practices will resume four weeks prior to state competition.
& Flag Football
- Bowling No additional practices will be scheduled. Individual practice on own is encouraged.

ABSENCES

Athletes and parent/legal guardians must understand the commitment that is involved when participating in any SO sport. Inconsistent attendance does not benefit the athlete nor teammates in any competition. **Athletes are expected to attend all practices. If an athlete does not attend or make up at least 80% of practices, they will not be eligible to compete in the regional tournament or competition.** We understand athletes may become ill or have the occasional conflict, which will prohibit them from attending practices/games. Please keep your commitment to the team in mind when scheduling other activities that may conflict with our practices or competitions.

Team Sports: Athletes participating in team sports must be in attendance for all SO games and tournaments, including state level competitions. If athletes cannot commit, we ask that you refrain from participating in the sport for that season.

When teams are registered for SO competition, an athlete's individual scores make up the team's overall composite score. Having even one athlete missing lowers the team composite score from what was previously entered with SO. This may place the team at an unfair advantage or disadvantage against competitors.

AGE GROUPING

Age groupings are a frequent topic of discussion. To help understand the divisioning, below is SO Illinois' explanation of age groupings.

The athlete's competition age group is determined by the athlete's age as of the year of the event (*December 31 of the current year*). This allows for an easy determination of an athlete's age with no change of age grouping from one level of competition to another.

Example: Athlete A was born August 1, 2003; he will be competing in SO events during 2019. Athlete A is turning 16 during the year of the event, he/she will compete in the 16-99 age division in all competitions throughout the year.

Year of event:	2019
Athlete's year of birth:	<u>- 2003</u>
Athlete's competition age as year of event	= 16

AGE GROUPING CONTINUED...

AGE GROUPS USED IN ALL LEVELS OF COMPETITION for INDIVIDUAL SPORTS (WHENEVER POSSIBLE):

8 – 11 years	12 – 15 years	16 – 21 years
22 – 29 years	30 years and over	

TEAM SPORTS AND LOW INCIDENCE INDIVIDUAL SPORTS AGE GROUPS:*

Junior	8-15 years – Elementary and Middle (BUCS)
High School	14-22 years – High School (THUNDER)
Senior	16 & older – post high school or not a District 100 student (PIRATES).

*Only used when there are 2 or more teams or relatively equal ability in this age group at a tournament. If a junior or high school division is not available, athletes will compete with the senior age group.

Note: Whenever competitive divisions cannot be developed within one of the above stated age groups, the Games Director will have the option of combining one or more of the age groups or change the age limit to create competitive divisions.

STATE COMPETITIONS – BELVIDERE PARK DISTRICT PROCEDURES

ITINERARY & COMPETITION INFORMATION

All information for state events is based on when SO Illinois disperses information to the SOAD. The SOAD will do their best to relay pertinent information to state qualifying families as quickly as possible. Itinerary and competition information will be emailed with days, times, locations, and a packing list. Once released, Information can be found online at www.soill.org.

SUMMER GAMES MANDATORY MEETING

Summer Games is one of the largest events that the team will attend throughout the year, which a 3 day event. This means that athletes and coaches will stay overnight and more communication is needed at both ends. This summer, any athlete who qualifies to attend the Summer Games and plans to attend, MUST have a parent/guardian present at the mandatory Summer Games Meeting. During the meeting, the following topics will be addressed: medication, packing, parent/spectator expectations, coaches' roles, and overall 2026 event procedures.

This meeting is mandatory and will take place two weeks prior to the competition's departure date. The tentative date for Summer Games is June 12-14. The mandatory meeting will be on Wednesday, June 3, 2026, 6pm at the Special Recreation Facility. More information will be sent out closer to the competition and meeting date.

TEAM SPORTS ATHLETES

If an athlete qualifies for the state competition in an individual sport (ex: track & field) and a team sport (ex: bocce) in which the state competition is held at the same time, the athlete will be committed to participate in the team sport competition over the individual sport. This includes participation in relay events in otherwise individual sports. There must be an adequate number of team members in attendance at a state competition for the team to compete. Otherwise, the team will forfeit participation. We want to reward athletes for their hard work and dedication by allowing them to compete at the state tournament.

TRAVEL & OVERNIGHT PROCEDURE

As preparations for state competitions are made, logistics of our travel and stay must also be organized. The intent of SO State Competition is for the athletes to experience competition at the advancement level. To allow each athlete the full experience of the state competition (team comradery, experience in lodging & nightly events, etc.), we also need to consider the financials and liabilities of our journey.



STATE COMPETITIONS – BELVIDERE PARK DISTRICT PROCEDURES CONTINUED...

To achieve the maximum experience for all, we are asking athletes or parents/legal guardians to choose from the following options:

1. Athletes will stay with a BPD Special Recreation Staff. The length of the stay will depend on the athlete's competition schedule. This will include travel to and from state competition, complete supervision, most/all meals, and lodging. Staff will be responsible for getting athletes to their event, watching them compete, retrieving from awards, and discussing any discrepancies with officials as needed. Reminder: circumstances may arise, which are out of the control of any staff or parent. * - or -
2. Athletes will stay in the care of a parent/legal guardian during state competition. This includes travel to and from state competition, complete supervision, all meals, and lodging. Parents will be responsible, to the best of their ability, for getting athletes to & from their events and awards. A BPD Special Recreation Staff will be present at the competition to give parents tentative times and locations, but may not be at all athletes' events.

If athletes are not in the direct care of a coach/staff, our team forfeits benefits of the state competition.

As stated in the SO guidelines:

"Agencies not staying in provided housing will not be provided any meals; will not have access to the 24-hour a day emergency medical services; may nullify the liability and secondary medical insurance provided by SO; will not be provided off-site shuttle bus transportation."

Additionally, our team will be subject to paying a fee if amenities are used by someone not utilizing the provided housing.

*There must be a minimum of 4 athletes for BPD Special Recreation to continue moving forward with Option 1. If there are not 4 athletes utilizing this option, a coach/staff will be present at State Competition only during competition times. This coach/staff will not have the opportunity to stay overnight; therefore, they will be commuting each day. If your athlete needs transportation for their event, they will have the option to commute each day of State to Summer Games with the coach/staff in an agency vehicle.

TYPICAL SPORTS TRAINING LOCATIONS

1. Special Recreation Facility*	6581 Revlon Dr, Belvidere	Bocce-Indoors
*All sports depart from this location for games and tournaments.		
2. Rivers Edge Recreation Center	1151 w. Locust Ave. Belvidere, IL	Basketball, Bocce (outdoors) Track & Field, Volleyball
3. Sundstrand Park	2288 Newburg Rd, Belvidere, IL 61008	Snowshoe, Softball, Flag Football
4. The Cherry Bowl	7171 Cherryvale N. Blvd, Cherry Valley	Bowling

Please note that although these are our typical training locations, they are subject to change. If practice locations, parents and athletes will be **notified via email or the Remind app**.

TRANSPORTATION REQUIREMENTS

All travel to games/competitions will be made via BPD approved vehicles. To ensure all athletes arrive with ample time for check-in and warm-up, athletes are expected to travel to and from with the team. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the SOAD. Departure times are prompt, which ensure adequate travel time and pre-competition activities. If an athlete is not present a maximum of 5 minutes after set departure time, the team will depart without athlete. It is then the athlete's responsibility to arrange transportation to the event.

Athletes utilizing their own transportation at the conclusion of an event must be signed out on the roster prior to departure. If athlete is their own guardian, they sign themselves out – otherwise, the sign out MUST be done by a parent/legal guardian. If an athlete is departing with someone other than a parent/legal guardian, that person MUST be listed as a pick-up person in ePACT.

BELVIDERE PARK DISTRICT SPECIAL RECREATION PIRATES SPORTS OFFERINGS 2025 – 2026

SPORT	DAYS	DATES	REGION TOURNAMENT	SECTIONAL TOURNAMENT	STATE TOURNAMENT
BOCCE	Monday	July 6, 2026-August 24,2026	August 29,2026	N/A	November 6 th ,2026
-Athletes may only complete in 1 event: singles or doubles.					
TRACK & FIELD	Tuesday	March 10 – April 28, 2025	May 2, 2026	N/A	June 12-14 , 2026
-TRACK & FIELD EVENTS OFFERED: Track: 100m, 400m, 800 m, 1500m & 3000m walk; 50m, 100m, 200m, 400m race; and 4x100 relay race. Field: Standing & Running long jump, Softball & Tennis Ball throw, Shot Put, and Mini-Jav. -Athletes may choose 1 track event and 1 field event, 2 track events, or 2 field events.					
SOFTBALL TEAM & SKILLS	Tuesday	May 26th– July 21, 2026	TBD	N/A	October 17-18, 2026
BOWLING	Thursday	June 11 – August 13, 2026	August 15 – 16, 2026 (tentative)	N/A	December 13, 2026
-Athletes may only complete in 1 event: singles or doubles.					
FLAG FOOTBALL TEAM	Wednesday	August 5 – September 23, 2026	September 26, 2026 (tentative)	N/A	November 6 – 7, 2026
VOLLEYBALL TEAM	Tuesday	July 14 – September 8, 2026	September 13, 2026	N/A	October 18 – 19, 2026
SNOWSHOE	Saturday	October 3 – December 5, 2026	December 12, 2026 (tentative)	N/A	TBD
-SNOWSHOE INDIVIDUAL EVENTS OFFERED: 50m, 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m, and 1600m Race. -RELAYS OFFERED: 4x100m Relay. -Athletes may be entered in a maximum of 2 – individual events and 1 – relay event.					
BASKETBALL SKILLS	Tuesday	October 27 – January 5, 2027	TBD	N/A	March 12 – 13, 2027
BASKETBALL TEAM	Tuesday	October 6– January 23, 2027	TBD	N/A	March 12 – 13, 2027

ALL DATES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE PER SPECIAL OLYMPICS

WEATHER PROCEDURE FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS COMPETITION

SO Illinois is frequently disrupted by weather. To help in understanding their weather guidelines, included is an excerpt from their policies and procedures documents. These guidelines will be followed for competition:

GUIDELINES FOR ALL EVENTS

Cancellations will be decided on a case-by-case basis



HEAT GUIDELINES FOR ALL ONE DAY EVENTS

If any of the following conditions are forecasted or are reached during the event, the event will be canceled:

1. Temperature above 95 degrees.
2. Heat Index above 102 degrees.
3. The National Weather Service has issued a Heat Warning for the time frame of the event.

Weather Procedure – Continued on next page...



WEATHER PROCEDURE FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS COMPETITION CONTINUED...

COLD GUIDELINES FOR ALL ONE DAY EVENTS

If any of the following conditions are forecasted or reached during the event, the event will be canceled:

1. Temperature or temperature with wind chill of below zero requires the Event Director (SOILL staff member in charge of event) to determine if event will continue as scheduled, is if canceled or if a modified schedule can be implemented to ensure adequate warming time for athletes and volunteers. If a temperature or temperature with wind chill of 10 degrees below zero or colder are forecasted or reached during the event, the event will be canceled.
2. Outdoor events: The National Weather Service has issued a Wind Chill Warning, Winter Storm Warning or Blizzard Warning for the day of the event.
3. Indoor & Outdoor Events: Authorities have issued Travel Warnings.

LIGHTNING GUIDELINES

If any of the following conditions exist, the event is suspended, and individuals are moved to a safe location:

1. The facility lightning detection device provides an alert.
2. If no lightning detection device, then the first flash or lightning or clap of thunder.

Activity may not be resumed for 30 minutes after both the last sound of thunder and last flash of lightning.

STATE SPECIFIC EVENT GUIDELINES

1. Winter Games – Competition suspended when the temperature is 10 degrees below zero or colder. If the temperature is forecasted to be 10 degrees below for all 3 days, the event will be cancelled.
2. Summer Games – Suspension or cancellation of competition when temperature is 95 degrees or heat index is above 102 degrees. SO Illinois will communicate any schedule changes during the event.
3. Outdoor Sports Festival – If any of the following conditions are met, the event will be suspended or cancelled depending on the circumstances.
 - a. Temperature of 95 degrees.
 - b. Heat Index over 102 degrees.
 - c. The National Weather Service has issued a Heat Advisory or Warning for time frame of event.

CANCELLATION OF EVENT

The top priority is the health and safety of all involved in an event. The decision on cancellation will be made whenever possible, no later than 12 hours prior to the event. Region hosts make the decision for Region events and chapter sports staff make the decision for state events.

1. In the event that a competition must be called prior to the start of play, the following steps will take place:
 - a. Time of cancellation and method of communication established by Event Director; procedures distributed to all head coaches.
 - b. Advancement to the next level of play will be determined by “the luck of the draw.” Each division “winner” will be determined by random draw. No awards will be given. The SO Illinois designated staff member will conduct the draw as soon as possible after the cancellation notice. Notification of winners will be by email or telephone as soon as possible upon completion of the draw.

Weather Procedure-Cancellation of Event – Continued on next page...



WEATHER PROCEDURE FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS COMPETITION CONTINUED...

2. In the event that a competition must be called once it has begun, the following steps will take place for qualifying competitions:
 - a. All records will be reviewed at the time of suspension of competition. If a clear winner has been determined for a division, that winner will advance to the next level of competition. Appropriate awards will be given. If a competition has not begun within a division, then each division "winner" will be determined by random draw. No awards will be given.
 - b. For bracketed divisions where competition has begun within a division and the championship contenders determined but the championship game not played, winner will be determined by a random draw of just the two teams. No awards will be given except in the event that other places within that event have been determined.
 - c. For bracketed divisions where play has begun within a division but no championship contenders determined, then winner will be determined by a random draw of those teams still in the running. No awards will be given.
 - d. If conditions allow, drawings will take place immediately upon suspension and prior to the departure of team representatives from the suspended tournament. If an agency/athlete chooses not to attend the competition that has not been cancelled, that agency/athlete removes themselves from consideration for the draw in the competition if the meet is suspended.
3. If the competition in question is the State Tournament, the following will hold true:
 - a. If no winner has been determined, there will not be a winner or champion for said division (except soccer).
 - b. If places have been determined, appropriate awards will be given.
 - c. If the tournament is cancelled prior to the start of play, no winners will be determined. All registered athletes and coaches will receive the tournament memento.

WEATHER PROCEDURE FOR BELVIDERE PARK DISTRICT SPECIAL OLYMPICS PRACTICE/GAME

While following SO guidelines, we have created a weather policy for our outdoors sports. Weather will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Indoor practices may also be canceled if transportation could be at risk due to weather. Canceled practices will be determined a minimum of 2 hours prior to scheduled practice.

HEAT GUIDELINES

- Heat index of less than 80: Water breaks every 30 minutes.
- Heat index of less than 90: Water breaks every 20 minutes. Practice will not exceed 1 hour.
- Heat index of less than 102: Water breaks every 10 minutes. Practice will not exceed 1 hour, but may be shortened as needed.
- Heat index above 102 degrees: No outdoor practice. If able, practice will be moved indoors.

COLD GUIDELINES*

- Wind Chill Factor less than 45F. Maximum of 45 min of exposure – remainder of practice indoors, if able.
- Wind Chill Factor less than 35F: Maximum of 30 min of exposure – remainder of practice indoors, if able.
- Wind Chill Factor less than 25F: Maximum of 15 min of exposure – remainder of practice indoors, if able.
- Wind Chill Factor less than 15F: No outdoor exposure – practice will be moved indoors or canceled, if able.

*For outdoor sports, please dress appropriately and always plan to be outside. Dress in layers!



UNIFORM EXPECTATIONS

It is expected that athletes wear the proper uniform for competitions and games. Uniforms will be issued for most sports prior to the first game or competition and must be returned by the due date listed on the Athlete Uniform Rental Form.

Failure to return the uniform by the due date may result in a charge of \$25 per item not returned to athlete's household account. Any damage to the uniform may also result in a charge to your household account. Athlete will not be able to register for additional programs until uniform is returned in its original condition or non-returned/damage fees are paid.

PRACTICE, GAME, & COMPETITION ATTIRE/EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

SPORT	SETTING	PRACTICE ATTIRE (NOT PROVIDED)	GAME ATTIRE	EQUIPMENT	FOOTWEAR (NOT PROVIDED)	NOTES/SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS
BOCCCE	IN/OUT-DOORS	ATHLETIC PANTS/SHORTS & NON-RESTRICTIVE TOP	POLO SHIRT and SHORTS (provided)	BOCCE BALLS (provided)	ATHLETIC SHOES	N/A
TRACK & FIELD	IN/OUT-DOORS	ATHLETIC PANTS/SHORTS & NON-RESTRICTIVE TOP	SLEEVELESS JERSEY and ATHLETIC SHORTS (provided)	BATON, MINI-JAV, SOFTBALL, TENNIS BALL (all provided)	ATHLETIC SHOES	Running cleats are allowed, but not required.
SOFTBALL	OUTDOORS	ATHLETIC PANTS/SHORTS & NON-RESTRICTIVE TOP	JERSEY and SHORTS (provided)	GLOVE (not provided), HELMET, BAT, & SOFTBALL (all provided)	ATHLETIC SHOES OR RUBBER CLEATS	Baseball Cap and Sunglass are suggested.
BOWLING	INDOORS	CASUAL ATTIRE	POLO SHIRT (provided) and COMFORTABLE BOTTOMS (not provided)	BOWLING BALL (not provided)	BOWLING SHOES (included) – to only be worn while on lanes.	N/A
FLAG FOOTBALL	OUTDOORS	ATHLETIC PANTS/SHORTS & NON-RESTRICTIVE TOP	SHORTS (provided) and JERSEY (provided, but athlete keeps at conclusion of season)	FLAGS & FOOTBALL (both provided) MOUTH GUARD (not provided)	ATHLETIC SHOES or RUBBER CLEATS (optional)	Dress weather appropriate. If jersey is lost or damaged, will be required to purchase new jersey. It is recommended to purchase a football for at-home practice.
VOLLEYBALL	INDOORS	ATHLETIC PANTS/SHORTS & NON-RESTRICTIVE TOP	JERSEY and SHORTS (provided)	VOLLEYBALL	ATHLETIC SHOES	Knee pads are suggested.
SNOWSHOE	OUTDOORS	2-3 LAYERS OF CLOTHING, SNOW PANTS, GLOVES, & HAT	WINTER HAT (provided)	SNOWSHOES (provided)	SNOW BOOTS or ATHLETIC SHOES, weather depending.	Practice will be held outdoors regardless of weather, please dress accordingly.
BASKETBALL	INDOORS	ATHLETIC PANTS/SHORTS & NON-RESTRICTIVE TOP	SLEEVELESS JERSEY and ATHLETIC SHORTS (both provided) WHITE T-SHIRT (optional, not provided)	BASKETBALL (provided)	ATHLETIC SHOES If wet outside, bring shoes to change into for safety of athletes.	Athletes are encouraged to purchase a basketball for at-home practice.

REMINDERS:

- Bring a water bottle to each practice. Water for refills will be made available by BPD Special Recreation.
- Bring a healthy snack for SO competition days (optional).
- Bring a change of clothes to SO competitions in the event that athlete does not qualify for state competition.

Uniforms are expected to be returned upon completion of competition.

- All belongings should fit into one duffle bag or backpack during travel to games and competition.
- Suggested items: lawn chairs/blankets (competitions with limited seating), sunscreen, bug spray, or activities for bus ride.

PRACTICE EXPECTATIONS FOR PARENTS/SPECTATORS

As we understand it may be convenient and desired for parents/spectators to stay and observe practice, we ask you to please be respectful of all the athletes, coaches, and others involved. Practices are a sport's "classroom," not only for the athletes, but the coaches as well. Coaches must be able to remain focused to keep athletes on tasks and be able to adapt drills for each of our athletes to be successful. Please refrain from cheering or yelling during drills, which may distract and sometimes discourage athletes.

Closed practices: certain sports have "closed" practices to allow for optimal practice environment. Please respect this time and refrain from entering the practice area. During closed practices, only athletes and coaches are permitted to attend. If available, there will be a sitting area with coffee and water at the practice location.

Closed practices are listed on the schedule.

On the opposite side, we understand that many families drop off their athletes and leave the property during practice times. As this is always acceptable, be sure you return to pick up your athlete at least 10 minutes prior to the conclusion of practice.

MEDICATIONS

Medications may be administered to an athlete at a SO event with written permission from parent/legal guardian. To ensure proper dispensing of medications, there are specific rules everyone must follow:

- To administer prescription medication, a Medication Administration Form must be completed.
 - All medications must be in an envelope(s) that will be provided.
 - The envelope MUST include the correct dosage for the exact time and date to be administered.
- The SOAD or a BPD Special Recreation staff are the only individuals allowed to dispense medication.
- To administer non-prescription medication, a Medication Administration Form must be completed. Such medication shall be administered according to medication package instructions and must be labeled with the athlete's name and date.
 - Any differences in medication procedures from parent/legal guardian instructions and packaged instructions will not be given without a doctor's note.
 - Aspirin and related products may not be used to control temperature at an event, but only as a pain reliever.

While we realize that many individuals take medications during our day camp/day program hours - it is still the parent's/legal guardian's responsibility to notify the SOAD of the need to take medication, even if medication is regularly in our possession. Special Recreation programs do not carry over with paperwork in these situations.



MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

All BPD Special Recreation staff are First Aid/CPR/AED certified. Teams carry a fully always equipped first aid kit with them. Your authorization for BPD Special Recreation staff to take whatever emergency medical measures deemed necessary is understood by signing the registration waiver.

In the event of minor injuries – the injury will be assessed, first aid will be administered, an accident report or minor accident report will be completed, and a parent/guardian will be notified.

In the event of serious injuries – Emergency Medical Services will be initiated and then an athlete's parents/legal guardians will be notified immediately. Athletes may be transported to the nearest hospital or hospital of choice if a parent/legal guardian is not present at time of injury. Staff are not allowed to transport athletes, but will accompany the athlete to the nearest hospital.

CONCUSSION

All coaches are required to complete a concussion awareness training prior to becoming an eligible SO Coach.

"A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury or TBI-caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or by a hit to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth. This sudden movement can cause the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull, stretching and damaging the brain cells and creating chemical changes in the brain." (CDC.gov, 2015)

More information in regards to concussions has been distributed as an additional handout to this handbook and can be found at this link: <http://www.cdc.gov/headsup/parents/index.html>.

NEW HORIZONS SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETES

Beginning in 2016, we have offered select SO sports to those participating in New Horizons. These sports include; Bocce, Track & Field, Bowling, Snowshoe, & Basketball Skills. New Horizons will practice these sports during program hours, please see monthly New Horizons calendars for practice days. A registration form that is specific to New Horizons SO will be sent home annually. New Horizon participants are encouraged to participate in our other sports as well!

ANNUAL VICTORY PARADE

All athletes who participated in a sport throughout the 2025 – 2026 season are invited to participate in the Annual Athlete Victory Parade! The parade is proudly supported by the Belvidere & Boone County Fire Departments, Belvidere & Boone County Police Departments, the Belvidere School District 100 athletic teams, and Gallano Trucking.

Athletes will meet at Belvidere Countryside Market parking lot to board a Gallano flatbed truck and ride down Pearl St, escorted by police and fire and cheered on by school district athletes, to the annual recognition banquet at the Community Building. More information will be provided as the event gets closer.

ANNUAL ATHLETE RECOGNITION BANQUET

All athletes (who participated in a sport throughout the 2025 – 2026 season) and families are invited to attend our Annual Athlete Recognition Banquet. The next banquet will be on May 14, 2026 at the Community Building. More information will be provided as the event gets closer.

There is a minimal fee for participation in the banquet, which offsets costs associated with facility usage, dinner/ dessert/drinks, awards, athlete gifts, and administrative fees. We hope to see you in May!



13TH ANNUAL HUG AN ATHLETE 5K

All proceeds from the "Hug An Athlete" 5K will benefit the BPD's SO athletes. The funds will be used towards new sports equipment, uniforms, scholarships for athletes in need, and the annual sports banquet and athlete gifts. We would greatly appreciate the help and support from our families to spread the word about this great fundraiser.

Athletes!! Please consider becoming a hugger! The runners who participate in the race love the hugs and high fives from the athletes as they cross the finish line. Let's show them how much we appreciate their support!

This year's race is scheduled for **FEBRUARY 22nd 2026** at **DOTY PARK at 1PM**.

POLAR PLUNGE

Join Belvidere Park District staff for Special Olympics annual Polar Plunge!! Staff create a team and raise funds to help your athletes by pledging to take a dip in the cold waters of Olsen Lake. The 2026 event will be held on Saturday, March 7, 2026. Contact more information about joining the BPD Special Recreation Team.

COACH INFORMATION

Coaches for our sports are typically individuals who are staffed by the BPD. Many of our coaches have had athletic experience, while some have a passion for working with the athletes and assisting them to success. Coach placement is determined based on a coach's strengths and best fit for the individual and/or team sport.

If you know of any individuals that may be interested in becoming a volunteer coach, then please send them our way! Volunteers will be required to complete agency and SO Illinois paperwork, and a criminal background check (which may take up to 2 weeks) before participating.

It is the procedure of the BPD Special Recreation to not utilize parents as coaches. Our goal is for the parents to enjoy being their child's cheerleader, while a coach gives them competitive instruction. We encourage all parents to work with their athlete outside of practice to help improve on their skill performance. We love parent involvement!

As we understand parents wishing to give added direction to their child, please respect the coach's time with your athletes while at practice and at competition. Additionally, please remember that it can be challenging to work with a wide range of abilities. All staff/coaches do their best to provide a quality experience for everyone involved.



SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETIC DIRECTOR (SOAD) COMMUNICATION

PRACTICE/COMPETITION COMMUNICATION

- While in training or competition, please refrain from communicating with the coach and allow them to instruct athletes. Communicating with parents is important to us – a staff or the SOAD will arrive to event 15 minutes before and stay 15 minutes after to address any questions or concerns from parents.
- If you have a concern you'd like to bring to the SOAD/staff attention, please schedule a meeting to allow for adequate attention to your concern.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION

- All competition updates and information will be sent to athletes via email.
- Updates for practices and anything other than competition will be sent through Remind.
- If you make any changes to your email address, it is your responsibility to ensure it is update in RecTrac (park district registration software) and ePACT. Contact the SOAD with questions on how to update in these platforms. The email in RecTrac is referred to and used as the first method of contact.
- Please add the SOAD to your safe contact list to prevent important information from becoming spam.

TEXTING/CALLING

- The park district regularly uses the convenience of texting. If texting is not a good form of communication, please contact the SOAD so they can call you with any SO needs.

Emails, voicemails (desk phone), and calls/texts will be responded to within 24 – 48 hours and during regular office hours – Monday thru Friday, 9am – 5pm. If either position is out the of the office for an extended amount of time, their voicemail will state a return date and an automatic reply will be added to email messages. Calls/texts on cell phones will be answered upon return. If you do not hear back from the call/text on a cell phone, please call the desk number or send an email.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETIC DIRECTOR (SOAD) CONTACT INFORMATION

SOAD

Gina Ruvalcaba gruvalcaba@belviderepark.org Desk: 815-547-5711 ext. 602 Cell: 815-298-0452 (Call/Text)

ATHLETE SPORTSMANSHIP CODE OF CONDUCT

GENERAL INFORMATION

Participation in SO is both an honor and privilege. The primary purpose of this code of conduct is to establish a standard for athlete behavior that will ensure the safety and well-being of all involved during sport training and competition.

The following Sportsmanship Contract is to be acknowledged all BPD Special Recreation athletes, annually and is a code of conduct which all athletes must follow while participating in all SO sports. Athletes will not be allowed to participate until the contract has been acknowledged by signing and dating the attached form. Any violations to the contract may result in the inability to participate or removal from a sport for the season.

ATHLETE SPORTSMANSHIP CONTRACT

The Sportsmanship Contract is an agreement of sportsmanlike conduct that athletes will follow while participating in BPD -Special Recreation and SO. This contract is in place to ensure that all athletes are treated with respect and allows for everyone to feel like an important part of the team.

Athletes will:

- commit to train regularly.
- be dependable when playing in a team sport. Teammates will know that an athlete will be present at practice and all games, meets, competitions, etc.
- show respect for teammates, volunteers, coaches, officials, and event coordinators who, through their time and efforts, provide these SO opportunities to athletes.
- show respect for all training and competition facilities and equipment.
- encourage teammates with kind words in all aspects of competition.
- trust in teammates and own playing abilities in competition and practice.
- show respect for all competitors and display good sportsmanship throughout all SO events.
- listen when coaches speak and not question coaching decisions. This means paying attention when a coach is speaking or explaining directions and asking questions when something is not understood.
- commit to knowing and following the rules and policies for all SO events.
- participate honestly and with maximum effort in all aspects of participation: training, preliminary trials and/or finals – not “holding back” abilities just to get into an easier division.
- refrain from use of profanity or verbal abuse toward anyone associated with the SO event and refrain from using violent or disruptive behavior.
- refrain from use of alcohol, illegal drugs, and any other controlled substances and refrain from using any drugs for the purpose of improving performance.
- refrain from inappropriate or unwanted physical, verbal, or sexual advances on others.
- refrain from illegal activities.
- understand that SO Illinois has a no tolerance policy regarding physical altercations involving coaches, athletes, unified partners, volunteers, spectators, family members, etc.



PARENT/SPECTATOR CODE OF CONDUCT

GENERAL INFORMATION

BPD Special Recreation agrees that we all have a responsibility to promote high standards of behavior during training and competition. Our primary goal is for all athletes to enjoy competing in a safe and positive environment. Remember athlete's training time is for them to develop their technical, physical, tactical, and social skills. Winning isn't everything!

Parents/spectators are expected to exhibit a certain level of decorum, respecting the procedures and guidelines of this handbook and the team you are representing. Parents/spectators agree that their athlete's participation in BPD Special Recreation SO will be taken seriously. Athletes have committed to their entire sport season, their team, and give their best during competition and parents/spectators will support their commitment. Furthermore, parents/spectators will agree to educate themselves on unique rules of each sport of participation – contacting the SOAD for copy of the rules or obtaining them from the SO website. If something is not understood, clarity will be sought with the SOAD directly.

PARENT/SPECTATOR CODE OF CONDUCT

Play your part and always observe the SO Code of Conduct for spectators and parents/legal guardians.

As a parent/legal guardian or spectator, I will:

- remember that athletes play for FUN.
- always display good sportsmanship.
- encourage athlete and their team, regardless of the competition's outcome.
- always respect the match officials' decisions. PLEASE allow the Head Coach or SOAD to challenge any and all questionable decisions.
- remain outside the field of play and within the designated spectators' area (where provided).
- let the coach do their job and not confuse the players by telling them what to do.
- encourage the players to respect the opposition, referee, and match officials.
- avoid criticizing a player or coaches for making a mistake - mistakes are part of learning and no one is perfect.
- never engage in, or tolerate, offensive, insulting, or abusive language or behavior.

