

Special Olympics Canada and Special Olympics Nova Scotia  
**ATHLETE PROTECTION POLICY**

*This Policy has been prepared by Special Olympics Canada and is a Pan-Canadian Policy applicable to Special Olympics Canada and its Chapters. This document cannot be modified by a Chapter without consultation and approval from Special Olympics Canada.*

**EFFECTIVE DATE: September 2022**

**LAST REVISED:**

**Definitions**

1. Terms in this Policy are defined as follows:

- a) **Athlete** – An individual who is an Athlete Participant in Special Olympics Canada or a Chapter who is subject to the policies of Special Olympics Canada or the Chapter
- b) **Chapter** – means the Provincial or Territorial Special Olympics organization recognized by Special Olympics Canada as a provincial or territorial governing body of Special Olympics
- c) **Participant** – Refers to all categories of individual members and/or registrants defined in the By-laws of Special Olympics Canada or the Chapter who are subject to the policies of Special Olympics Canada or the Chapter, as well as all people employed by, contracted by, or engaged in activities with, Special Olympics Canada or the Chapter including, but not limited to, employees, contractors, Athletes, coaches, instructors, officials, volunteers, managers, administrators, committee members, parents or guardians, and Directors and Officers
- d) **Person in Authority** – Any Participant who holds a position of authority within Special Olympics Canada or the Chapter including, but not limited to, coaches, instructors, officials, managers, staff, support personnel, chaperones, committee members, and Directors and Officers
- e) **Vulnerable Participant** – Includes Minors and vulnerable adults (people who, because of age, disability or other circumstance, are in a position of dependence on others or are otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by people in positions of trust or authority)

**Purpose**

- 2. This *Athlete Protection Policy* describes how Persons in Authority shall maintain a safe sport environment for all Athletes.

**Interactions between Persons in Authority and Athletes – the ‘Rule of Two’**

- 3. Special Olympics Canada requires that the ‘Rule of Two’ be followed for all Persons in Authority who interact with Athletes, to the maximum extent feasible. The ‘Rule of Two’ is a directive that says that an Athlete must never be alone one-on-one with an unrelated Person in Authority.
- 4. Special Olympics Canada recognizes that fully implementing the ‘Rule of Two’ may not always be possible in some instances. Consequently, at a minimum, interactions between Persons in Authority and Athletes must respect the following:
  - a) The training environment should be visible and accessible so that all interactions between Persons in Authority and Athletes are observable.
  - b) Private and one-on-one situations that are not observable by another adult or Athlete should be avoided to the maximum extent possible.
  - c) A Vulnerable Participant who has a parent/guardian, may not be alone under the supervision of a Person in Authority unless prior written permission is obtained from the Vulnerable Participant’s parent or guardian/caregiver.

- d) Persons in Authority may not invite or host in their home Vulnerable Participants who have parent/guardians, without the written permission from parents or guardians/caregivers or without parents or guardians/caregivers having knowledge of the visit at the time.

### **Practices and Competitions**

5. For practices and competitions, Special Olympics Canada recommends:
  - a) A Person in Authority should never be alone with a Vulnerable Participant prior to or following a competition or practice unless the Person in Authority is the Vulnerable Participant's parent or guardian
  - b) If the Vulnerable Participant is the first Athlete to arrive, the Athlete's parent should remain until another Athlete or Person in Authority arrives
  - c) If a Vulnerable Participant would potentially be alone with a Person in Authority following a competition or practice, the Person in Authority should ask another Person in Authority (or a parent or guardian of another Athlete) to stay until all of the Athletes have been picked up. If an adult is unavailable, another Athlete, who is not dependent on a guardian and is capable of giving their own consent, should be present in order to avoid the Person in Authority being alone with a Vulnerable Participant
  - d) Persons in Authority giving instructions, demonstrating skills, or facilitating drills or lessons to an individual Athlete should always do so within earshot and eyesight of another Person in Authority
  - e) Persons in Authority and Athletes should take steps to achieve transparency and accountability in their interactions. For example, a Person in Authority and an Athlete who know they will be away from other Participants for a lengthy period of time must inform another Person in Authority where they are going and when they are expected to return. Persons in Authority should always be reachable by phone or text message

### **Communications**

6. For communication between Persons in Authority and Athletes, Special Olympics Canada recommends:
  - a) Persons in Authority may only send texts, direct messages on social media or emails to individual Athletes when necessary and only for communicating information related to team issues and activities (e.g., non-personal information). Any such texts, messages or emails shall be professional in tone
  - b) Electronic communication between Persons in Authority and Athletes that is personal in nature should be avoided. If such personal communication is unavoidable, it must be recorded and available for review by another Person in Authority and/or by the Athlete's parent/guardian (when the Athlete is a Vulnerable Participant)
  - c) Parents/guardians/caregivers may request that their Vulnerable Participant not be contacted by a Person in Authority using any form of electronic communication and/or may request that certain information about their child not be distributed in any form of electronic communication
  - d) All communication between a Person in Authority and Athletes must be during reasonable hours of the day unless extenuating circumstances justify otherwise
  - e) Communication concerning non-prescription drugs or alcohol use (unless regarding its prohibition) is not permitted
  - f) No sexually explicit language or imagery or sexually oriented conversation may be communicated in any medium
  - g) Persons in Authority are not permitted to ask Athletes to keep a personal secret for them

### **Travel**

7. For travel involving Persons in Authority and Athletes, Special Olympics Canada recommends:
- Teams or groups of Athletes shall always have at least two Persons in Authority with them
  - For mixed gender teams or groups of Athletes, *in the event that Persons of Authority do not represent the identified genders of athletes, the Chapter can use discretionary quota (as per SOC Pan-Canadian Quota Policy) to add a Person of Authority or get the consent of the Athlete's parent/guardian for the Athlete to travel with the identified Persons of Authority.*
  - If two Persons in Authority cannot be present, reasonable efforts should be made to supplement supervision with d parents or other volunteers who have been screened
  - To the maximum extent possible, no Person in Authority may drive a vehicle alone with an Athlete unless the Person in Authority is the Athlete's parent or guardian
  - A Person in Authority may not share a hotel room or be alone with an Athlete unless the Person in Authority is the Athlete's parent/guardian/caregiver or spouse
  - Room or bed checks during overnight stays must be done by two Persons in Authority
  - For overnight travel when Athletes must share a hotel room, roommates must be age-appropriate (e.g., a reasonable age difference) and of the same gender identity

### **Locker Rooms / Changing Areas**

8. For locker rooms, changing areas and other closed meeting spaces, Special Olympics Canada recommends:
- Interactions between Persons in Authority and Athletes should not occur in any area where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy such as a locker room, washroom or changing area. A second adult should be present for any necessary interaction between an adult and an Athlete in any such area
  - If Persons in Authority are not present in the locker room or changing area, or if they are not permitted to be present, they should still be available outside the locker room or changing area and be able to enter the room or area if required, for reasons including but not limited to team communications and/or emergencies. When possible, the Person in Authority should be the same gender identity as the Vulnerable Participant.

### **Photography / Video**

9. For all photography and video of an Athlete, Special Olympics Canada recommends:
- Photographs and video should only be taken in public view. Content must observe generally accepted standards of decency, and be both appropriate for and in the best interest of the Athlete
  - The use of recording devices in areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy is strictly prohibited
  - Examples of photos that shall be edited or deleted include:
    - Images with misplaced apparel or where undergarments are showing
    - Suggestive or provocative poses
    - Embarrassing images
  - If any content featuring an Athlete will be used on any form of public media, the Athlete must have given their consent before the content is recorded

### **Physical Contact**

10. Some physical contact between Persons in Authority and Athletes may be necessary for various reasons including, but not limited to, teaching a skill or tending to an injury. For physical contact, Special Olympics Canada recommends:
- Persons in Authority must explain, at the beginning of training, the reasons to occasionally make physical contact with the Athlete and clearly explain where the physical contact will occur.

## **PAN-CANADIAN POLICY**

- b) Infrequent, incidental physical contact during a training session is not considered a violation of this policy
- c) Non-essential physical contact may not be initiated by the Person of Authority. It is recognized that some Athletes may initiate non-essential physical contact such as hugging or other physical contact with a Person in Authority for various reasons (e.g., such as celebrating or crying after a poor performance). This physical contact should always occur in an open and observable environment.

### **Enforcement**

11. Any alleged violations of this *Athlete Protection Policy* shall be addressed pursuant to the *Discipline and Complaints Policy* or, in the case of paid staff, to SOC's or the Chapter's relevant human resources policies.