



Guidelines for Inclusion of Transgender Participants in Special Olympics New Hampshire

Guidance from Special Olympics International was used to create this document.

Special Olympics New Hampshire (SONH) promotes a more inclusive world, respecting and celebrating diversity and the unique gifts of all individuals.

The health and safety of everyone participating in Special Olympics is of paramount importance to the organization. Athletes, Unified partners, volunteers or others, should feel that Special Olympics is a safe, positive and inclusive environment.

No participant should ever have to fear negative, threatening, discriminatory or adverse reactions or treatment by other athletes, coaches, or volunteers as a result of a participant's differences, including gender expression or identity.

All eligible participants should have the opportunity to participate in Special Olympics athletics/activities in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on the participants' medical or registration records and without subsequent medical or mental health care consultation.

For the purposes of this guidance, the following definitions apply:

- **Transgender Person:** A person whose gender identity does not match the sex assigned to him or her at birth.
- **Gender Identity:** A person's deeply-felt internal sense of being male or female.
- **Gender Expression:** A person's external characteristics and behaviors that are socially defined as either masculine or feminine, such as dress, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions.
- **Participant:** Special Olympics athletes, Unified partners, coaches, volunteers, or any other official delegates of a Program

Special Olympics recognizes that there are many different forms of sexual and gender identity. In application in Special Olympics, gender identity factors in specifically and most prominently with respect to 1) sport divisioning, 2) housing, and 3) changing/shower/restroom facilities, which follow current societal norms of "male" and "female" nomenclature.

For those individuals who identify as bigender, gender non-conforming, intersex individuals, or other gender identities, for the purposes of the above three primary applications of gender identity in Special Olympics, SONH will speak with the individual and/or their parent or legal guardian to verify the gender they will identify with during their involvement in Special Olympics so as to not cause confusion or situations that may affect other athletes or volunteers (example: team sports competition/categorization).

Gender Identity Based Participation Guidelines

These guidelines have been developed to help ensure the inclusion of transgender participants in all activities.

1. **Eligibility to Participate** – Eligible participants, those that meet all other registration requirements, are permitted to participate in a manner consistent with their gender identity in accordance with the position outlined below.
2. **Notice to Special Olympics** – The participant and/or legal guardian shall contact SONH's COO indicating that the participant has a gender identity different than the sex listed on the participant's athlete medical and/or registration records and that the participant desires to participate in a manner consistent with his/her



gender identity.

3. *Confidentiality* – With the exception of the notices required in points two and five of this document, participants affected by this policy have the right to and should expect confidentiality and discretion in all matters relating to this issue.
4. *Changing Areas, Restrooms and Showers* – Transgender participants shall be permitted to use the locker room, shower, and restroom facilities in accordance with New Hampshire’s state laws and the participant’s gender identity. When requested by a transgender participant, SONH will make every attempt to provide private, separate changing, showering, and toilet facilities for the participant’s use, but transgender participants are not be required to use separate facilities.
5. *Housing* – Transgender participants should be provided housing accommodations based on their gender identity, with a recognition that:
 - a. any athlete who needs extra privacy/supervision should be accommodated whenever possible and
 - b. the non-transgender roommate(s) and their parents/guardians are notified and given the opportunity to request alternate accommodations.

If shared housing is not an option, the transgender participant will be accommodated with a room to him/herself or with his/her family/support system in compliance with the SONH housing and volunteer screening policies.

6. *Sports Participation* –In the event that divisioning requires separation by gender, athlete divisioning will be based on the participant’s gender identity.
7. *Language: Preferred names and pronouns* – A transgender participant may have a preferred name and gender pronouns that is different from what may be indicated by the participant’s registration records. Coaches, volunteers, and officials shall make every reasonable effort to honor the participant’s preferred name and pronouns and to ensure that the participant’s name and pronoun preferences are respected by others including teammates, opponents, fans, etc.
 - a. This guideline applies not only for transgender participant who seek to participate in Special Olympics in a manner consistent with their gender identity, but also to those whose participation is consistent with the sex on their registration records and not their gender identity.
8. *Dress code and team uniforms* – All participants should have uniforms as outlined in the Special Olympics Sports Rules. No participant should be required to wear a gendered uniform that conflicts with the participant’s gender identity. With respect to aquatics, transgender athletes should be permitted to wear whatever uniform is most comfortable for them so long as the suit does not extend below the knee or past the shoulders.

Approved: June 15, 2021

Updated: April 11, 2025