

UNIFIED SPORTS® & PARTNERS

Unified Sports® is a registered program of Special Olympics Inc. which combines an approximately equal number of Special Olympics athletes with non-disabled Partners who train and compete against other Unified Sports® teams. In addition, all participants on these teams are of similar age and skill ability. Other than the lowest division, all competition is run in accordance to the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules.

A Partner in Unified Sports® is an extremely important member of the Unified Sports® team. Much of the success or failure of a Unified Sports® program can be directly influenced by the commitment and philosophy of the Partners on the team. It is extremely important for the Partner to adhere and abide by the following guidelines:

- **Be a Teammate, not a Coach** - Unified Sports® teams in Group 1 are required to have a non-playing adult head coach in charge of the line-up and conduct of the team during competition:
Group 1 Sports are Basketball, Soccer, Softball, Floor Hockey, Flag Football and Volleyball.

It is the partner's job to establish peer relationships with the other team members and to compete within the framework set by the coach.

- **Practice Makes Perfect** - Each Special Olympics Unified Sports® team is expected to train at least eight weeks prior to state competition. Practice is essential to the development of physical conditioning, sports skills, game strategies, teamwork and team spirit. Attending practice should be mandatory for all team members.
- **Do your Best** - Every competitor on a Unified Sports® team should compete to the best of his/her abilities within the framework of the team. Partners who dominate competition when doing their best should be placed on a team more compatible to their skill level. The coach should recruit another individual whose abilities are similar to the other members on the team.
- **Know the Rules** - All Special Olympics Unified Sports® competitions are conducted in accordance to a specific set of rules. Learning these rules and competing by them in a sportsmanlike manner ensures a positive experience.
- **Be a Friend** - Practices and competitions are only a part of the experience of sports. Utilize time before or after organized team activities to get to know new teammates.
- **Be an Ambassador** - Being a member of a Unified Sports® team provides a unique opportunity to spread the word about Special Olympics and its athletes.
- **Make a Commitment** - Joining a team is fun, but it also comes with a commitment. This means more than just committing to the coach or play; the team commitment extends to every other member of the team. Everyone is affected when a team member quits or consistently misses practices or doesn't show up for a qualifying event.