



The health and safety of all Special Olympics participants is of paramount importance to Special Olympics. Participants should feel that every Special Olympics event is a safe and positive experience and should not be fearful of other athletes, coaches or volunteers.

Arranging housing for overnight events involves the consideration of a variety of factors, including the varying abilities, ages and behaviors of athletes, the availability of housing and the costs associated with overnight accommodations.

SOCT's housing policy that meets minimum requirements as set forth by the Risk Management & Insurance Task Force of SOI are as follows:

1. **GENDER** - Athletes and volunteers may not share a room with an athlete or volunteer of the opposite sex. The following exceptions are allowed:
 - a. Married athletes who are both attending the event as members of a registered delegation. This exception does not apply to the spouse of an athlete who is not participating in the event, but attending solely as a spectator.
 - b. Married volunteers who are both attending the event as members of a registered delegation. This exception does not apply if one of the volunteers is required to share a room with an athlete (other than the married couple's child), if this scenario will create a situation whereby an athlete is housed with a volunteer of the opposite sex.
 - c. Family members of the opposite sex who serve as a one-to-one chaperone for the related athlete.
 - d. Housing in a facility that has multiple private rooms in addition to living space (such as condominium or university residence hall). Both males and females may be assigned to one unit, if necessary, but private rooms may not be shared by individuals of the opposite sex. Chaperones must also be housed in the unit and the chaperone/athlete ratio must be maintained.
 - e. Use of barracks or other facility (such as a gym) where a large number of individuals are assigned to one room. Athletes and volunteers must be separated as much as possible by gender (for example, females on one side of the gym and males on the other side).
 - f. Written request from an Agency explaining why a particular staff member of the opposite sex may need to be in the same room as an athlete.

2. **SUPERVISION** – The chaperone/athlete ratio of at least one properly registered chaperone to at least every 4 athletes must be maintained during overnight events. Proper supervision can be maintained without having a chaperone present in the room at all times. All chaperones must be screened in accordance with the Special Olympics U.S. Volunteer Screening Policy.
3. **YOUNG ATHLETES** – Young Athletes events that involve overnight activities require increased supervision and therefore, Young Athletes participants must be accompanied by a properly registered and screened parent, guardian or an individual designated by a parent or guardian at all overnight activities. Rooming assignments for Young Athletes should be separate from the remainder of the delegation, whenever possible (for example, separate hotel rooms).
4. **ACKNOWLEDGMENT** – Each local program must secure a parent's/guardian's signature acknowledging the possibility for overnight activities and that additional information about the rooming assignments or SOCT's Housing Policy should be directed to SOCT. Athletes who are legally responsible for themselves are permitted to provide acknowledgment on their own behalf. Notification may be provided and signature secured via the following methods:
 - a. New Athletes (athletes registering for the first time on or after January 1, 2014) must acknowledge the possibility of overnight stays at the time of their initial registration with SOCT. This information is found on the Athlete Release Form and the Unified Partner Form.
 - b. Existing athletes (athletes registered prior to January 1, 2014) must acknowledge the possibility of overnight stays no later than three years or the due date of each athlete's next athlete medical (whichever comes first). Such notification is provided via the Athlete Release Form and the Unified Partner Form.
5. **POLICY IMPLEMENTATION** – The SOCT Sports Department is responsible for implementing this policy at events. All staff in the Sports Department are familiar with the housing policy.

BEST PRACTICES

1. **Rooming Assignments** – if athletes will be sharing a room, following is a list of items other than gender to consider when making room assignments:
 - a. Consider matching athletes based on size, level of maturity, ability and age.
 - b. Ask for connecting rooms to those athletes who require additional assistance or supervision if the chaperone will not be in the same room (hotels may or may not be able to accommodate these requests).
2. **Sleeping Arrangements** – Whenever possible, each member of the delegation should be assigned his/her own bed. If bed sharing is required, an athlete may not share a bed with a chaperone unless the chaperone is a parent or sibling of

the athlete and has been screened in compliance with the Special Olympics U.S. Volunteer Screening Policy.

- a. Housing in hotels is 3 individuals per room; to help reduce the number of athletes required to share beds:
 - i. Hotel rollaway beds are available at a nominal fee
 - ii. Cots are available from SOCT at no cost unless they are not returned to the Operations Center on Sunday morning of the Games
 - iii. Cots and/or rollaways must be requested on the Housing registration forms
 - iv. Programs may bring air mattresses to increase the number of beds available
 - v. The space availability for rollaways, cots and/or air mattresses are subject to fire code regulations at each facility
- b. If bed sharing is required, Programs may consider having athletes pack sleeping bags and require athletes to sleep in his/her sleeping bag on top of the linens that are provided.
- c. Housing in university residence halls is typically 2 individuals per room unless there are suites or apartments available. In such cases, each room may have more than 2 beds.

3. **Supervision:**

- a. Hotels, Residence Halls:
 - i. Ensure that the chaperone has a key to the athletes' room(s)
 - ii. Ensure that the athletes know how to reach a chaperone at all times
 - iii. Consider using hall monitors
- b. Residence Halls: whenever possible, leave the doors to private rooms open so that chaperone can monitor each room
- c. Barracks (or other facility with a large number of beds in one room): whenever possible, chaperones should be assigned to a location in close proximity to the athletes he/she is supervising

4. **Family Members** – prohibit family members of any age from staying in athlete housing unless the family member is an official member of the registered delegation and is screened in compliance with the Special Olympics U.S. Volunteer Screening Policy.