## Special Olympics Ohio

## Swimming Rules Manual (Rev. 12/2022)

### All Special Olympics Ohio Swimming events are run according to the USA Swimming Rules as the National Governing Body. Any modifications to those rules shall be found in this manual.

### Official Events

The SOOH Swimming season runs October through February. The State Tournament is held during the 1st quarter of each year. To qualify for the State Swimming Competition athletes must be in a training program for at least 8 weeks prior to the State Competition and compete at a Regional Qualifying swim meet.

Special Olympics Ohio provides a range of events to offer athletes of varying abilities the opportunity to compete. The following is a list of official events available in Special Olympics Ohio.

* 25M Breaststroke
* 25M Backstroke
* 25M Freestyle
* 25M Butterfly
* 4 x 25M Medley Relay (Traditional & Unified)
* 4 x 25 Free style Relay (Traditional & Unified)
* 50M Breaststroke
* 50M Backstroke
* 50M Freestyle
* 50M Butterfly
* 4 x 50 M Free Relay (Traditional and Unified)
* 100M Breaststroke
* 100M Backstroke
* 100M Freestyle
* 100M Butterfly
* 100M Individual Medley
* 200M Backstroke
* 200M Freestyle
* 200M Breaststroke
* 200M IM

### Rules of Competition

**All Events**

The technical rules of competition can be found in the USA Swimming rules book which can be referenced at https://www.usaswimming.org/officials/rules-regulations

Any modifications to the USA Swimming rules can be found below:

* The Meet Referee, in cooperation with the Games Director, shall have the authority to adjust these rules on a case-by-case basis for the safety and wellbeing of the athletes. The Meet Referee may intervene in the competition at any stage to ensure that the appropriate regulations are observed, and shall adjudicate all protests related to the competition in progress.
* The Meet Referee shall have full control and authority over all officials, approve their assignments and instruct them regarding all Special Olympics features or regulations related to the competitions. He/she shall enforce all rules and decisions of the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules and USA Swimming rules and shall decide all questions relating to the actual conduct of the meet, the final settlement of which is not otherwise covered by these rules.
* It is preferable that certified swimming officials (including the referee, timers and judges) be used in all events, if available.
* Swimmers who have a hearing or vision impairment may apply, at registration, for an ‘A’ Exception Code allowing them to have an assistant present on pool deck during the start. Vision impaired swimmers can also apply, at registration, for a ‘T’ Exception Code allowing them to have a Tapper.
* No competitor shall be permitted to use or wear any device that may aid his/her speed, buoyancy or endurance during a competition such as webbed gloves, flippers, fins, etc.
* Goggles may be worn by the swimmer.
* Swimmers may be assisted from the water upon request.
* Starts may be from the starting block, beside the starting block or from in-water. For in-water starts the athlete shall place one hand on the end of the pool or hold the starting block with one hand. Two hands shall be used for backstroke starts.
* Athletes must swim the full distance with no physical assistance.
* Standing on the bottom in the racing course is allowed for the purpose of resting. Walking on or jumping from the bottom must disqualify the competitor.
* During competitions, coaches must remain off the pool deck, unless given prior approval from the Competition Director on a case-by-case basis. Only athletes and Special Olympics Ohio official competition personnel and staff may be on the deck at any given time.

**Equipment**

* Swimwear must conform with the current USA Swimming rules. An exception may be granted by the Meet Referee/Meet Director for medical, cultural, religious or modesty reasons. These exceptions should allow male and female swimmers to cover a greater part/parts of the body but all swimwear must be made of textile material. For competition all applications for an exception to USA Swimming rule on swimwear must be submitted with the swimmer’s competition registration. It is recommended that lane lines marked at bottom of pool in accordance with USA Swimming regulations.
* Timing system: Special Olympics Ohio swimming events should use an electronic timing system if available (such as Colorado Timing Systems). If such a system is not available, events may use stopwatches, as long as there are 3 timekeepers assigned to each lane. In this instance, the swimmers official time and place will be taken as the average from the times recorded.
* Flags should be located 5 meters from each end of the pool to indicate distance to the finish, especially in respect to backstroke events. Flags should not be removed during competition or training sessions.

**Relay Events**

* Relay swimmers should exit the pool as soon as possible following the completion of their relay leg. Relay swimmers who cannot exit the water immediately may be allowed to remain in the lane until all relays have finished so long as they do not interfere with the other swimmers or the timing equipment.
* A swimmer remaining in the water should move a short distance away from the end of the pool, close to the lane rope but shall not obstruct a swimmer in another lane. Obstruction of a swimmer in another lane shall cause the team to be disqualified.

**Unified Sports Relay Events**

* Each Unified Sports relay team shall consist of two athletes and two partners.
* Swimmers on a Unified Sports relay team may be assigned to swim in any order.

**Markings**

* During competition all swimmers shall be identified by the use of individual markings. The markings will be written vertically on the upper part of both arms, in permanent marker, where it is visible at all times. It will be at the discretion of the competition director if another way of identification is allowed.
* During competition exception codes shall be identified on the swimmer’s arms. The code will be written vertically below the bib number on the upper part of both arms, where it is visible at all times. The exception codes can be written with a permanent marker. Exception codes are used where a swimmer cannot comply with the correct swimming rules for race starts, cultural, health or safety reasons.

### Safety Considerations

All Special Olympics Ohio swimming training, recreational sessions and competition events shall be conducted in accordance with the following practices, rules and procedures in order to ensure the safety and well-being of all Special Olympics athletes, coaches and volunteers:

**Basic Rules**

* There shall be at least one certified lifeguard on duty for every 25 swimmers in the water.
* The sole function of the lifeguard shall be to guard. If no relief lifeguard is available, the pool must be cleared, even for a short duration, when a lifeguard must leave the pool side.
* Athlete medical history forms shall be on site and relevant information shall be discussed with the lifeguard or medical personnel on duty in advance of the aquatic activity.
* Pool depths must be marked and easily visible.
* The minimum depth of the pool for racing starts shall meet USA Swimming specifications.
* It is recommended that all starting blocks meet USA Swimming specifications.
* Safety lines must be in place to divide shallow and deep water areas during recreational aquatic activities.
* A pool facility shall not be used unless a satisfactory inspection rating is received prior to any Special Olympics participant entering the water.
* An athlete with down syndrome who has been diagnosed with Atlanto-Axial Instability may not participate in Butterfly events, Individual Medley events, diving starts or diving.
* If in the judgment of the referee or competition management, an athlete’s swimming competence that the athlete is not capable of completing the race distance and may even put his/her life in danger, the referee may, with the Technical Delegate’s approval, require a test of swimming competence before the athlete is allowed to compete in any further swimming event or in any final.

**Emergency Action Plan**

* An Emergency Action Plan shall be in place prior to any Special Olympics participants entering the water for any reason, be it training, competition or recreation. The original plan should be written and reviewed by the staff on hand. The plan shall include the following: The procedure for obtaining emergency medical support if a medical doctor, paraprofessional or medical support is not present.
* The posts, and areas of responsibilities for each lifeguard.
* The procedure for reporting accidents.
* The chain of command in case of a serious accident.

**Supervisory Personnel Requirements**

* An adequate number of supervisory personnel shall be present at all swimming sessions, events or recreational activities. The type of personnel will vary in accordance with the following requirements:
  + Recreational Programs
    - Enough certified lifeguards to provide a minimum ratio of guards to swimmers of 1 per 25.
  + Training Programs
    - Enough certified lifeguards to provide a minimum ratio of guards to swimmers of 1 per 25.
    - Enough coaches (Special Olympics Ohio certified) to provide for adequate supervision and training of each athlete.
  + Competitions
    - Enough certified lifeguards to provide a minimum ratio of guards to swimmers of 1 per 25.
    - Enough supervision to provide for a minimum ratio of observer to swimmers of 1 per 2 for those swimmers who are prone to seizures.