

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



What is Special Olympics?

Special Olympics in St. Mary's County is a year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Each local program is accredited by the state organization. Local finances are maintained at the state level, with audited processes and procedures. Each sport has an established set of rules based on related programs.

What sports does St. Mary's offer?

We have 14 sports in St. Mary's. Right now, the sports are divided by season as follows:

Winter (Jan – Mar)

Alpine Skiing
Snowshoeing
Basketball

Summer Apr - Jun

Aquatics (Swimming)
Athletics (Track & Field)
Bocce
Cheerleading
Softball

Fall Jul - Dec

Cycling
Flag Football
Golf
Kayaking
Sailing
Soccer

How old does my child have to be to participate?

An athlete can compete in local and state events if they are 8 years of age or older. Athletes can practice in local sports programs at the age of 7. Some may participate at a younger age if the Young Athletes program is active in your school. (See section on Young Athletes)

What is the criteria for Participation?

If a child has an IEP in school and/or an adult with intellectual disabilities, and would benefit from the Special Olympics program, they are eligible to participate in the community program for Special Olympics Maryland – St. Mary's County (SOMD-SMC).

How do we register?

Go to our website (www.somdsmc.org) and go to the Registration button at the top right. Go to the bottom of this document and contact the Area Director or the Volunteer Coordinator for more information on how to get involved or to register your child for one or more of the sports we offer. Check out our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/specialolympicssmc> for updated events and happenings. We use an electronic registration that is sent to

the email address on file for our athletes. For those without email a paper form can be sent to their mailing address on file. Items can be forwarded to Special Olympics Maryland - St. Mary's County through regular mail (address is below), through the school system, or dropped off at the Center for Life Enrichment.

Special Olympics can only contact a person if they express interest in the program. Each athlete must have a completed Special Olympics Medical form to participate in the sports program. Along with a completed Communicable Disease Waiver (CDW) form The athletes medical (physical) is good for 3 years and depending on the age of the athlete the CDW will be valid at least 3 years.

Who are the Coaches and Volunteers?

Our coaches/volunteers come from within the community, parents, and family members. All coaches attend a state-sponsored training program and orientation session. Coach certification is good for 3 years; however, annual updates are encouraged. They must abide by the Coach's code of conduct at all times when working with our athletes.

Can my child practice at school and still participate in local competitions?

Yes, the physical education teachers, adaptive PE Coordinator, throughout the county can work with the management team of Special Olympics Maryland - St. Mary's to train and get preliminary results of an athlete so that they can participate in the local competitions. **Local Sports Days can be held for school students in the sports of soccer, basketball, and track.**

What is the annual event called Spring Games?

This Annual Spring Games is used as a qualifier for the Community Programs of Athletics (Track and =Field) and Bocce. The intellectually disabled students of al S. Mary's County Schools both public and private are invited to participate in the games to learn firsthand what Special Olympics is all about. They are held in the spring time at a high school and conducted by SOMD-SMC staff members with volunteer support from the community at large.

Are there other ways that I, as a family member, can help, even if I am not that good in sports?

Yes, Special Olympics Maryland St. Mary's County has a management team, needs help to obtain professional services and donations, event set-up, fundraising, and can always use assistance with equipment and uniforms. If you have the desire to help, we can find you a job.

What is the Young Athletes Program (YAP)?

Young Athletes Program, developed by Special Olympics, is a gross motor program designed for children ages 2-7 years of age. Trough participation in basic motor skills, YAP provides opportunities for peer interaction, social skills following directions and facilitated language activities. At the age of 7 this child will be able to train with the Special Olympics community program in a sport they are interested in and start competing at the age of 8 years old.

When and where are practices?

Each sport has a typical practice schedule and location. These include:

Alpine Skiing Local practice on roller skates is held at the Leonard Hall Drill Hall after school on Thursdays from **January through February**. On-snow skiing training is held in February at a ski resort in nearby Pennsylvania (weekend trip). State competition in late February at WISP ski resort in McHenry, MD (3-day trip). **Three levels of downhill skiing – novice, intermediate, and advanced. Modified skiing – in a sit ski device (used for persons that have limited mobility).**

Snowshoeing Practice is at Miedzinski Park in the ballfield (on the snow if there is any but, on the grass, if not) on Thursdays from **January through February**. On-snow training weekend in February. State Competition in late February at the same ski resort as skiing (3-day trip). **Races are 25M, 50M, 100M, 200M+, relay teams.**

Basketball Practices are held on Saturdays at area schools (Green Holly & Cornerstone Church) from **January through March**. Local competitions are in February and early to mid-March. State competition is at the end of March. **Levels are half-court (3v3); full court (5v5), player development (mixture of both athletes and Unified Players), and skills – adult and children (dribble, shoot, wall bounce).**

Aquatics (Swimming) Practices are normally held on Sunday evenings at the Great Mills indoor pool from **March through May**. Local competition in May, state competition in June at Towson University. **Beginner, intermediate, and advanced level swimmers – various strokes, relay teams.**

Athletics (Track & Field) Practices are held at Great Mills High School on Saturdays from **April through June**. Local competition in late April or early May. State competition is in June at Towson University (3-day trip).

Consists of track (walks and runs), shotput, standing/running jump, high jump, softball/tennis ball or mini jav, throw, relay teams, pentathlon. Adaptive activities offered locally.

Bocce Practices are held on Thursdays from **April through June** at Dorsey Park. Tri-county competitions are held in May; the state competition is in June at Towson University (3-day event). **Athletes play in singles and doubles. The state offers a unified and four player events also.**

Cheerleading This is sport was added to our list of programs in 2021 and is offered from **April through June** State competition is in June at Towson University. (1 day trip on Friday). These athletes may wish to join another sport for summer games as long as it doesn't have competitions on Friday.

Softball Practices are held on Saturdays at Jarboesville Park from **April through June**. Regional competition in May in Howard County. State competition in June at either Towson University or Kiwanis Wallas Park, Ellicott City. **This is a team of up to 15 players who are athletes or a unified team of both SO players and regular players. There is also a skills component to this sport.**

Cycling Practices are held on Saturday mornings from **July through September** onboard NAS Patuxent River. State competition in October. Athletes ride two-wheel bikes and 3-wheel bikes. **Race lengths vary from 500 meters, 1000 meters, 5K, 10K and longer. SOMD-SMC does have some bikes that athletes use.**

Flag Football Practices are held on Saturday mornings from **August through September** at Jarboesville Park. State competition in October at Mount St. Mary's University – Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Golf Practices are held on Thursdays at Wicomico Shore from **July through September**. Skills practices are held at the Wicomico Shores Course. Athletes and partners play in a series of competitions throughout Maryland (on weekends). State competition toward the end of September at Queenstown Harbor Golf Course. ***Athlete and a partner play on the golf course together – alternate shot. Skills athletes learn to putt, chip, and hit on the range.***

Kayaking Practices are held locally on Monday evenings between 3:30PM and 5:30PM at Sotterley Plantation from **June through August**. An athlete must be able to swim and be seizure-free to participate. State competition is held in October normally at Hodson Boathouse Washington College Chestertown, MD. ***Races vary from 100-meter, 200-meter, 500 meter, and 1000 meter. Requires some arm strength. A unified event also exists with an athlete and a partner in a boat.***

Sailing This is a locally popular program meaning it is not offered by SOMD as a state level competition. This program is

offered based on the availability of boat skippers. Practices are held at St. Mary's College waterfront on Tuesdays in **June and July**. Competition in July again held at St. Mary's College waterfront. Requires athlete to sail for 2 hrs at a time, to be seizure-free, and be able to swim. Personal flotation devices (PFDs) are required and provided by the college. Various levels of training available.

Soccer Practices are held on Tuesdays at Lancaster Park or Chancellor's Run Park after school from August through October. Local tournament in early-October, State competition at the end of October normally held at *Crown Sports Center, Fruitland MD*. ***This is a team sport with 5v5 and 7v7 teams, player development, and unified teams as well as offering skills (dribble, kick, run and shoot).***

The SOMD-SMC Area Director is available for questions or registration assistance throughout the year at 301-904-1719 or director@somdsmc.org and the volunteer coordinator can be reached at diane.huseman@gmail.com

SPECIAL OLYMPICS Maryland ***St. Mary's County***

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