

Sportsmanship, Safety and Conduct Guidelines

Safe, and meaningful competition with no tolerance for unsportsmanlike conduct

Purpose

Special Olympics New York is committed to the highest ideals of sportsmanship, respect, inclusion, and athlete safety. All participants are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects positively on the Special Olympics movement.

This guidance establishes a **no tolerance standard** for unsportsmanlike conduct by athletes, coaches, volunteers, and spectators. The standards outlined below are applicable to all.

This guidance is consistent with:

- Special Olympics Codes of Conduct
 - New York State interscholastic athletics sportsmanship expectations
 - The authority of officials to ensure a safe and respectful competitive environment
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I. Definition of Unsportsmanlike Conduct

Unsportsmanlike conduct may include, but is not limited to:

A. Verbal Misconduct

- Use of abusive, insulting, or profane language
- Taunting, baiting, or intimidation
- Disrespect toward officials, opponents, teammates, or spectators

(Special Olympics explicitly prohibits bad language, insults, and disrespectful behavior)

B. Physical Misconduct

- Fighting or attempting to strike another individual
- Aggressive or dangerous physical actions
- Any behavior that threatens the safety of participants

(All participants are prohibited from fighting or engaging in harmful conduct)

C. Behavioral / Ethical Violations

- Refusal to follow official instructions
- Deliberate cheating or manipulation of competition

- Unsportsmanlike gestures or demonstrations
- Harassment, bullying, or discrimination

D. Coach/Bench Misconduct

- In addition to all conduct outlined in sections A., B., & C., failure to control team personnel
- Public criticism of officials
- Tolerating or encouraging unsportsmanlike behavior

(Coaches must demonstrate control, respect, and professionalism)

II. No Tolerance Standard

Special Olympics New York enforces a **zero-tolerance approach** to unsportsmanlike conduct:

- **No warning is required.** No warning should be anticipated for severe, dangerous or provoking violations
 - Immediate disciplinary action may be taken by officials
 - Safety, dignity, and respect take precedence over competition
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III. Authority of Officials

Game officials, referees, and event directors have **full authority** to enforce this policy, including:

- Issuing warnings
 - Assessing penalties
 - Removing individuals
 - Suspending play
 - Declaring forfeiture when necessary
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IV. Removal from Contest (Ejection Criteria)

An official **shall remove (eject)** any athlete, coach, or team member for:

Immediate Ejection (No Warning Required)

- Fighting or physical aggression
- Threatening behavior
- Use of slurs or discriminatory language
- Intentional contact with an official
- Leaving the bench area to engage in conflict

Ejection After Warning or Minor Infractions

- Repeated verbal abuse or dissent
 - Continued unsportsmanlike behavior after instruction to stop
 - Persistent refusal to comply with rules or officials
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V. Removal of Coaches

A coach may be removed when they:

- Fail to control team behavior
- Direct unsportsmanlike conduct
- Publicly argue or harass officials
- Engage in abusive language or behavior

(Coaches are required to model respect, dignity, and professionalism)

VI. Team Sanctions and Tournament Removal

A team may be removed from a game or tournament when:

- Multiple team members are ejected
- The bench or sideline becomes uncontrollable
- Spectator behavior linked to the team creates unsafe conditions
- The team refuses to comply with officials or event management
- Continued play presents a risk to safety or integrity of competition

Possible sanctions include:

- Game forfeiture
 - Disqualification from the tournament
 - Referral for further disciplinary review by Special Olympics New York
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VII. Progressive Discipline (When Appropriate)

For non-egregious behavior, officials may use:

1. Verbal warning
2. Formal warning / penalty
3. Ejection
4. Tournament disqualification

However, **severe actions bypass progressive steps.**

VIII. Post-Incident Review

All ejections and removals shall be documented and may result in:

- Suspension from future competitions
- Required sportsmanship or conduct review
- Additional sanctions by Special Olympics New York

(Violation of the Code of Conduct can result in loss of participation privileges)

IX. Guiding Principles

This policy is rooted in the Special Olympics commitment that all participants:

- Show respect for others
- Demonstrate good sportsmanship
- Follow rules and authority
- Ensure a safe, positive environment for all

(Participants are expected to act with respect and not insult, fight, or behave abusively)

X. Summary (Plain Language)

- Respect everyone
- Follow the rules
- Listen to officials
- No fighting, no abusive language
- If behavior crosses the line → immediate removal