

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why was the process developed?

The screening policy was developed to protect athletes and to assist the Special Olympics organization in its defense in cases of sexual abuse and molestation – therefore, programs must be able to demonstrate that they have made a good faith reasonable effort to comply with this policy. Full implementation will also help the organization to retain its sexual abuse and molestation insurance coverage.

How should programs handle issues concerning the release of information about minors? (Example – schools not allowed to release information.)

In such an instance, the person who writes a reference for a student can simply write: “this person is not suitable for volunteering.”

Are hired drivers considered Class A volunteers?

No. Programs are not required to conduct the required screening on drivers hired commercially or employed by unrelated agencies (unless those drivers are also acting as Class A Volunteers). However, programs should ensure that a reputable company is used to transport the athletes and that the company has appropriately screened its drivers and has adequate liability insurance.

Are family members, parents, siblings or extend family members of athletes required to undergo background checks?

Yes. Family members of athletes are subject to the screening requirements when they are serving in a Class A Volunteer capacity.

Are athletes serving in Class A volunteer capacities required to undergo background checks?

Yes. Athletes are subject to the screening requirements when they are serving in a Class A Volunteer capacity. An athlete ineligible to volunteer may still be eligible to continue participating as an athlete.

Is an individual who is paid by his/her employer to conduct Special Olympics activities considered a Special Olympics volunteer?

Yes. Individuals who meet the definition of Class A Volunteers are subject to background checks regardless of whether or not they are being paid by their employer while acting as a volunteer.

Are programs permitted to allow a volunteer to begin serving as a Class A Volunteer prior to completion of the appropriate screening?

No. Programs are required to conduct the screening prior to allowing the individual to serve as a Class A Volunteer for Special Olympics. Note, however, that a person who has completed the registration form and provided proper photo ID may serve as a Class B Volunteer pending completion of appropriate background screening.

Will a criminal background check conducted by a volunteer's employer satisfy the screening requirement?

No. To ensure that we are obtaining consistent data, each program is required to conduct its own screening on existing and new Class A Volunteers as outlined in the volunteer screening policy.

Are individuals who are not eligible to volunteer in a Class A Volunteer capacity (due to his/her criminal history) permitted to volunteer as a Class B Volunteer?

No. Once a program acquires knowledge that a potential or existing volunteer (Class A or Class B) has a criminal history that would disqualify an individual from volunteering in a Class A capacity, the individual is no longer eligible to volunteer on behalf of Special Olympics in any capacity.

What if a program is notified of an individual's alleged criminal history from a source other than an approved vendor's screening of the individual's background (such as from another volunteer or organization)?

Programs should be extremely cautious about relying on such information, unless it is credible. SOVA staff can request a more thorough search of a person's criminal history if necessary.

What if a program is notified of an individual's alleged criminal history and the individual is not an athlete or a volunteer?

If the person does not pose an immediate threat to the health and wellbeing of the athletes and volunteers and is not acting in a disruptive manner the individual may continue as a Special Olympics spectator.

What if a disqualified volunteer believes that the criminal history record used to determine eligibility is incorrect?

All disqualified volunteers will receive information about how to contact SOVA's vendor if they believe information regarding their criminal history is incorrect.

What if a volunteer does not provide a program with information that is required to conduct the appropriate screening (such as a social security number)?

The individual shall not be permitted to volunteer on behalf of Special Olympics.

How do we handle last minute volunteer substitutions?

If a Class A Volunteer is unable to attend an event and sends a substitute who has not been screened, the substitute is permitted to volunteer at that event only if a screened Class A Volunteer or Special Olympics staff member supervises that individual.

When does an individual become a volunteer?

A person is not considered a Special Olympics volunteer until a person has submitted a completed volunteer registration for, and in the case of a Class A Volunteer, has been screened by Special Olympics. For example, if a person or persons begin Special Olympics type activities without the approval of a Special Olympics Accredited Program, then such persons are not Special Olympics volunteers until their activities are recognized by the Accredited Program and they have complied with the volunteer screening policy. Additionally, volunteers not registered are NOT covered by Special Olympics insurance policies.