

ARTICLE 30
UNIFIED SPORTS
BOYS AND GIRLS

Unified Sports™ were created and developed to give individuals with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to train and compete in sports activities. To be eligible for participation in Unified Sports™, a competitor must agree to observe and abide by the official Special Olympics sports rules. The following Unified Sports™ programs are offered to RIIL member schools: co-ed basketball and volleyball. These participants shall be known as “athletes”.

Section 1. ELIGIBILITY FOR UNIFIED SPORTS

1. To be eligible for participation in Unified Sports™, an outgrowth of Special Olympics, a competitor must agree to observe and abide by the RIIL and Special Olympics Sports Rules.
2. Unified Sports™ and its parent-arm, Special Olympics, were created and developed to give individuals with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to train and compete in sports activities. No person shall, on the grounds of sex, race, religion, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity of Special Olympics.
3. Eligibility for participation in Unified Sports™:
 - a. General Statement of Eligibility. Every person with intellectual disabilities is eligible to participate in Unified Sports™ if they are enrolled in any RIIL Member school.
 - b. Age Requirements. The age requirement for participation in Unified Sports™ is waived, BUT, athletes are subject to the Eight (8) Semester Rule.
 - c. Degree of Disability. Participation in Unified Sports™ training and competition is open to all persons with intellectual disabilities who meet the requirement of the RIIL, regardless of the level or degree of that person’s disability, and whether or not that person also has other mental or physical disabilities, and is able to participate in a meaningful manner along with their team and so long as that person poses no safety concerns as to the well-being of themselves or other players. Consequently, in order to ensure the safety of all participants, the use of wheelchairs, crutches, unpadded braces, walkers, and any other assistive aids that pose a safety threat are prohibited for use by these General Rules.
 - d. Identifying Persons with Intellectual Disabilities. A person is considered to have intellectual disabilities for purposes of determining his or her eligibility to participate in Unified Sports™ if that person satisfies any one of the following requirements:
 - * The person has been identified by an agency or professional as having intellectual disabilities as determined by their localities; or
 - * The person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures such as intelligent quotient or “IQ” testing or other measures which are generally accepted within the professional community in that Accredited Program’s nation as being a reliable measurement of the existence of a cognitive delay; or
 - * The person has a closely related developmental disability. A “closely related developmental disability” means having functional limitations in both general learning (such as IQ) and in adaptive skills (such as in recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care). However, persons whose functional limitations are based solely on a physical, behavioral, or emotional disability, or a specific learning or sensory disability, are not eligible to participate as Special Olympic athletes, but may be eligible to be partners or volunteer for Unified Sports™.

Section 2. UNIFIED PARTNER ELIGIBILITY

1. Definition

Unified Sports™ is a program that combines approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes and athletes without intellectual disabilities (partners) on sports teams for training and competition. Unified Sports™ was developed to provide Special Olympics athletes with the choice of a sports program that brings about meaningful inclusion with their non-disabled peers.

2. Partner Eligibility

The above definition allows partners to participate as an athlete in accordance with the rules and regulations of the RI Interscholastic league. Age and ability matching of athletes and partners is specifically defined on a sport-by-sport basis.

- a. Special Olympics RI will adopt this Partner Eligibility Statement and not allow Unified teams comprised solely with disabilities.
- b. The spirit of Unified Sports™ intends to introduce opportunities to these Special Partners who do not qualify/play at a varsity or junior varsity or freshman level to participate on a Unified Sports™ team in co-ed basketball and volleyball. However, Unified Sports™ programs would be remiss if we did not allow all non-intellectually disabled (ID) students to qualify as Partners.

Questions regarding the partner eligibility statement can be directed to the RIIL at 401-272-9844.

Section 3. Other

1. Unified Sports™ coaches: Article 13 – RIIL Coaching Requirement is modified for coaches in Unified Sports™. The coaches must take the NFHS online concussion course and be Red Cross certified along with CPR training. The modification is that the coaches may take the NFHS online coaching Unified Sports Course instead of the NFHS Fundamentals of Coaching Course.
2. Limitation of Season: Article 7, Section 3 – The practice limitation for the number of practices of ten (10) days is waived for Unified Sports™ only
3. All Unified Sports™ student-athlete names are to be placed on RIIL eligibility list prior to the first contest
4. Assumption of Risk forms (original) must be sent to the RIIL prior to the first contest

Section 4. Out of State Competition

Any RIIL participating school wishing to play out of state must request in writing to the RIIL for a special variance. Competition must be sanctioned by the RIIL.

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