



Play Unified. Live Unified.

Special Olympics New Jersey is committed to ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to participate safely and successfully in Physical Education and athletic, extracurricular and recreational activities that lead to a healthy, active, and fulfilling lifestyle.

Throughout the year, Special Olympics New Jersey offers training and competition in 24 sports to 25,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities. An area of targeted growth for Special Olympics programming is partnering with and supporting New Jersey's schools. Currently, over 10,000 students, in over 100 schools and 12 colleges, experience sports, fitness, fun and friendship in environments where everyone is welcomed through Special Olympics' school-based Play Unified Clubs, Unified Sports, and social inclusion programs.

Unified Champion Schools Program

Through the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools program, Special Olympics New Jersey offers schools and districts grants, professional and coaches training, equipment and technical assistance to support them in designing and implementing robust, sustainable fully inclusive sport, fitness and extracurricular programs to enrich the lives of all their students.

What is Special Olympics Unified Sports®?

Special Olympics Unified Sports® joins people with and without intellectual disabilities together as teammates, each one a meaningful and equal part of the team. Teams are made up of peers of similar age and ability who play together in developmental, recreational or competitive settings. It is inspired by a simple principle: training together and playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding.

Co-curricular	Interscholastic	SONJ/Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive P.E. • 3 on 3 & mini-tournaments • SONJ Play Unified Club sports & fitness activities • Unified Game Days • Unified Sports clinics • Intramurals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SONJ Play Unified club competitions • NJSIAA athletics; inclusive team participation and/or Unified divisions/events • School-based Special Olympics training and competition program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-based SONJ training and competition • Community-based adaptive sports & fitness programs • Inclusive sports and fitness at recreation centers

Join the Partnership!

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The Playbook on the New Jersey Sports Legislation

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On June 19, 2014, Governor Christie signed legislation regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in athletic activities (N.J.S.A. 18A:11-3.5 et seq.). This historic law is effective in the 2015 – 2016 school year.

1) Why is the new sports law important?

This law requires school districts *ensure students with disabilities have equal access and opportunities to participate in athletics*, as well as, *provide opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in existing adaptive and Special Olympics Unified Sports® programs*. It applies to athletic programs including clubs, intramural, and interscholastic athletic activities.

2) What is required of school districts under the new sports law?

School districts must make reasonable efforts to provide a student with a disability the opportunity to participate in existing adaptive or Special Olympics Unified Sports®. Therefore, *school districts must be prepared to provide inclusive sports options for students with disabilities as early as July 1, 2015*.

3) How does this law differ from requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”)?

IDEA	NJ SPORTS LEGISLATION
1. Provide equal opportunities to participate in extracurricular and nonacademic activities	1. ENSURE equal access and opportunity to participate in athletic activities
2. NO requirement to provide nonacademic services and extracurricular activities to students with disabilities	2. District must make reasonable efforts to provide opportunities to participate in existing adaptive and Special Olympics Unified Sports®
3. Requires an IEP team determination of the extent a student shall not participate	3. Student must be allowed to try out for and if selected participate in athletic programs
4. Must include supplemental aids and services students need to participate	4. Same
5. Unclear the extent to which reasonable modifications must be provided	5. MUST make reasonable modifications as long as the modification does not create a health or safety risk or fundamentally alter the game
6. Students with disabilities do not have a right to be on a competitive team	6. Same
7. District does not have to create separate activities for students with disabilities	7. District must provide an opportunity to participate in existing adaptive or Special Olympics Unified Sports®/existing adaptive and Special Olympics Unified Programs

4) Is a student entitled to play on a competitive team?

No, a student with a disability is not entitled to play on a school’s competitive team. However, this legislation ensures a student with a disability must be given an opportunity to try out for and if selected, participate on a competitive team. If not selected, districts must provide students with an alternative adaptive or Special Olympics Unified Sports® option.

5) Is a district required to provide modifications and accommodations to a student?

Yes, each school district must ensure the provision of reasonable modifications or services necessary to give a student with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in athletic activities.

6) Are there exceptions which limit a student’s opportunity to participate in athletic activities?

Yes, if inclusion of a student with disabilities presents an objective health or safety risk to the student or to others; or fundamentally alters the athletic activity. In either of these instances, the student may not be able to participate in the activity, but the District **must** provide the alternatives mentioned above.

7) Who decides if an objective health or safety risk exists or if there is a fundamental alteration to the game?

This is not specifically addressed in the law. Based on other cases it seems clear, it is not the coach or athletic director alone. It is likely that this will be an IEP team decision. Remember, Athletic Directors and or coaches can be included as IEP team members.

8) If a student attends an out-of-district school program, what are his rights under the new law?

A student in an out-of-district school program has the right to participate in the athletic programs of the sending school district. There is, however, no requirement for the out-of-district school to create and provide athletic programs.