

MEMORANDUM

TO: Local Program Coordinators

CC: SOMT Staff

FROM: Brittani Bush, VP of Sports

Date: October 7, 2024

RE: 2026 Special Olympics USA Games Quota & Selection Process – Special Olympics Team Montana

2026 Special Olympics USA National Games

Team Montana will be comprised of **54 total delegates** from across Montana who will represent Special Olympics Montana at the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games in Minneapolis, Minnesota from June 20-26, 2026.

Special Olympics Montana will have participants from 7 different sports – Athletics (Track & Field), basketball, bocce, bowling, golf, gymnastics, and aquatics (swimming). NOTE: The basketball team will be a Unified Sports 5v5 team.

A complete list of the SOMT quota breakdown is included in this memo.

The 2026 Special Olympics USA Games will take place in some of the best sports facilities in the Minneapolis area – University of Minnesota & the National Sports Center in Blaine.

Travel dates may be between June 17-27. More information to follow.

The 2026 Special Olympics USA Games will feature 4,000 athletes, 1,500 coaches, 10,000 volunteers and 75,000 fans, all of whom will unite in the Minneapolis area and participate in one of the country's most cherished sporting events.

Athletes will compete in 16 Olympics-type team and individual sports. The mission for the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games is to create an inclusive event that celebrates ABILITY, delivers the highest quality experiences for all stakeholders, and leaves a legacy of positive change in Minnesota.

Learn more about the 2026 Special Olympics USA Games: <https://2026specialolympicsusagames.org/>.

Expenses

Special Olympics Montana will cover essential games costs including travel, uniforms, delegation meals, etc. There will be no additional financial burden for local programs which have athletes, teams, or coaches selected from their community.

Team Montana delegates will be required to help fundraise for Team Montana through specific fundraising initiatives. Turnkey fundraising materials will be provided to all athletes and unified partners. More details will be shared once the team is selected later in the 2025 calendar year.

Advancement to 2026 Special Olympics USA Games Process – Montana Teams & Athletes

SOMT athletes and teams will be eligible for consideration for SO USA Games advancement by receiving a gold medal* (in SO Team Montana quota selected events).

Quota Selected Events:

- *Athletics (Track & Field) – 2025 State Summer Games*

- *Aquatics (Swimming) – 2025 State Summer Games*
- *Bocce – 2025 State Summer Games*
- *Golf – 2025 State Summer Games*
- *Gymnastics – 2025 State Summer Games*
- *Bowling – 2025 Bowling Championships (various locations statewide)*
- *Basketball – 2024 State Basketball Tournament*

**In a few cases, athletes/teams who earn a lower place than gold may also be included on a list for consideration if participant numbers were very small. This will be done to ensure there are enough candidates in the drawing. Gold medalists will still take priority should they clear the initial screening process.*

- A complete list of SOMT 2026 USA Games Team Montana Quota is shared in this document.
- Final lists of the athletes to be considered for the drawing for the 2026 USA Games will be made available on specific dates (see timeline for each sport). Local Program Coordinators will review and inform SOMT of any concerns and provide endorsement or recommendation of removal for consideration. A complete list of criteria will be shared with local programs and assistance from SOMT staff will be provided.
- Athletes will be considered for the drawing in all sports/events in which they have qualified to be eligible (occasionally athletes will earn a gold in multiple sports that have quota slots). However, each athlete will only be selected in one sport for USA Games. In the highly unlikely case that an athlete is selected in more than one sport, they would be asked to choose one sport.
- Local programs will review the list of gold medalists in quota related sports/events by published due dates. NO LATE ENTRIES will be accepted. Applicants will be screened for appropriateness to travel, behavior, ability to be away from home for over a week, etc. (published criteria standards shared with local programs).

Advancement to SO USA Games Process – Coaches in Athletics, Aquatics, Bocce, Golf, Gymnastics, Bowling, & Basketball

- *Coaches will apply independent of their athletes and may be selected even if none of their local program athletes are selected. Coaches are not assured a selection to Team Montana if one of more of their athletes are selected. This should not be an issue since coaches will be selected prior to the athlete drawing.*
- *A selection committee will conduct interviews to select all 2026 Team Montana coaches. More information is shared in the timeline below.*

2026 Special Olympics USA Games – TEAM MONTANA Athlete/Team Application & Selection Timeline (tentative and subject to change)

- **October 7, 2024** – 2026 Special Olympics USA Games Team Montana Selection Process Memo shared with local programs and coaches.
- **October 7, 2024** – 2026 Special Olympics USA Games Team Montana Coach Applications Available. An email blast will be shared with local programs and coaches. Applications will also be posted on the SOMT website.
- **November 18, 2024** – List of athletes and unified partners eligible for consideration in BASKETBALL will be distributed to local programs for review.

- **November 22, 2024** – List of athletes and unified partners eligible for consideration in BASKETBALL due to the state office.
- **November 25, 2024** – Random weighted draw for BASKETBALL.
- **December 2 – 13, 2024** – Team Montana BASKETBALL candidate Interviews. Local Program Coordinators will be asked to assist in setting up interviews.
- **December 31, 2024** – Team Montana COACH applications DUE to the state office.
- **January 6-24, 2025** – Team Montana COACH candidate Interviews.
- **February 17, 2025** – List of athletes and unified partners eligible for consideration for BOWLING will be distributed to local programs for review.
- **February 21, 2025** – List of athletes and unified partners eligible for consideration for BOWLING due to the state office.
- **February 24, 2025** – Random weighted draw for BOWLING.
- **March 10 – 21, 2025** – Team Montana BOWLING candidate Interviews. Local Program Coordinators will be asked to assist in setting up interviews.
- **May 28, 2025** – List of athletes and unified partners eligible for consideration for SPRING SPORTS will be distributed to local programs for review.
- **June 2, 2025** – List of athletes and unified partners eligible for consideration for SPRING SPORTS will be due to the state office.
- **June 4, 2025** – Random weighted draw for ATHLETICS, BOCCE, GOLF, GYMNASTICS, SWIMMING.
- **Week of June 9-18, 2025** – Team Montana ATHLETICS, BOCCE, GOLF, GYMNASTICS, SWIMMING candidate interviews.
- **August/September** – *OFFICIAL TEAM MONTANA ANNOUNCEMENT. All selections will remain confidential until the official announcement.*
- **June 17-27, 2026** – USA Games in Minneapolis, Minnesota (dates for departure or return may be earlier or later).

***NOTE:** *Registration paperwork will be sent out to selected delegates following their official appointment to Team Montana – For planning purposes, please note that all medicals for athletes and unified partners must be filled out on the official USA Games medical form and MUST be dated after June 25, 2025.*

The Official Timeline with due dates and registration information will be distributed to Team Montana Delegates.

Weighted Draw:

Athletes who have attended previous World Games or National Games are eligible to advance, but there will be a weighted draw that increases the odds for those who have not attended before.

Example: Mandy has gone to World Games or National Games two times in their SOMT career. Jessica has only gone once. Wendy, Lillian, and Daisy have never been.

- Mandy's name would go in the hat once, Jessica's twice, and Wendy, Lillian, and Daisy's name would each go in three times. This is a weighted draw that is proportionate to the number of times that each athlete previously attended.

2026 Special Olympics USA Games – TEAM MONTANA QUOTA

24 Athletes, 10 Unified partners, 9 Coaches, 6 Staff, 2 Medical AS, 3 YLE = 54 Delegates

*Athlete & Unified Partner count subject to change based on finalized basketball roster

*Coach and Staff gender balance for Team Montana will be a factor in selection for those positions

Below is the quota allotment for Special Olympics Montana in the following 7 sports (+ UCS leadership):

Fall

Sport: **Basketball** – 1 Unified 5v5 team (5/5 or 6/4 ratio athletes/unified partners and 3 coaches)
Quota: Unified 5v5 Basketball Team
1 Head Coach and 2 Assistants will be selected with the basketball team – coaches must still apply and go through the interview process. If quota spots are left unfilled, additional coaches will be considered from outside of the team selected.

Winter

Sport: **Bowling** (2 athletes, 2 unified partners and 1 coach)
Quota: 1 female Unified doubles pair – (both must be female)
1 male Unified doubles pair – (both must be male)
1 male or female Head Coach will be selected independent of bowlers*

Spring

Sport: **Athletics** (4 athletes and 1 coach)
Quota: 2 females
2 males
1 male or female Head Coach will be selected independent of athletics athletes*

Sport: **Bocce** (2 athletes, 2 unified partners and 1 coach)
Quota: 1 female Unified bocce doubles team – (both must be female)
1 male Unified bocce doubles team – (both must be male)
1 male or female Head Coach will be selected independent of bocce players *

Sport: **Swimming (Aquatics)** (4 athletes and 1 coach)
Quota: 2 females
2 males
1 male or female Head Coach will be selected independent of swimmers*

Sport: **Golf** (3 athletes, 1 unified partner and 1 coach)
Quota: 1 female – Level 1 (Individual Skills)
1 male – Level 1 (Individual Skills)
1 female Unified Pair – Level 2 (9-hole alternate shot)
1 male or female Head Coach will be selected independent of golfers*

Sport: **Gymnastics (Artistic)** (4 athletes and 1 coach)
2 female – level 1 & 2
2 female – level 3 & 4
1 male or female Head Coach will be selected independent of gymnasts*

Other

Activity: Unified Champion Schools (UCS) Youth Leadership (1 athlete, 1 Unified partner, 1 chaperone)

Quota: 1 athlete – male or female
1 unified partner – male or female
1 adult chaperone – male or female

**These (3) individuals will be selected by SOMT UCS and Sports staff through a separate process.*