



**NORTHERN
LIGHTS**

SPORTS HANDBOOK
2025/2026

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Introduction

The purpose of the Northern Lights Sports Handbook is to inform both parents and athletes of the guidelines of Northern Lights and Special Olympics sports.

Northern Lights Special Olympics Agency is committed to providing Special Olympics sports programming for our athletes on a year round basis. Shining Abilities' is committed to providing these sports at low cost to families but it should be noted that there are programming fees associated with providing these recreational opportunities and it is in the best interest of the Shining Abilities organization, the volunteers, and families that participate with us to ensure we are not only providing affordable programming but setting our agency up for success and sustainability. The registration fees will help cover administration costs, sports equipment, facility rentals, etc. while allowing us to provide additional sports.

Important Information

- All athletes are required to pay the registration fee in order to participate with the Northern Lights Special Olympics Agency. If you have financial concerns, please reach out to Jenny or Jessy about different options available.
- Athletes will still need to meet the Special Olympics Illinois requirements for competition.

Special Olympics Medical Applications/Consent Form

Special Olympics **REQUIRES** all athletes to complete a Medical Application & Consent Form before they can participate in a Special Olympics sport.

- Northern Lights competes in Region B of Special Olympics. Region B provides programming for people in Lake, McHenry, and North suburban Cook Counties.
- Your Medical Application is valid for 3 years from the date of the exam.
- No other form will be accepted in place of the Medical Application.
- A blank copy of the Medical Application can be found on the Special Olympics Illinois website www.soill.org
- The Medical application should be completed as soon as possible if you plan to compete in any sport.
- The Consent Form is also required before an athlete is eligible to compete. This form can also be found on the Special Olympics Illinois website www.soill.org
- The Medical Application and Consent Form should be emailed directly to Special Olympics Illinois Region B. Contact information can be found below, as well as on the Special Olympics Illinois website www.soill.org
- If forms are not completed and submitted to Special Olympics Illinois by the deadline given for each sport, athletes will **NOT** be eligible to compete at Special Olympics Tournaments.
- If you have a valid Medical Application on file with another school or agency please let the SOAD's know.

Special Olympics Contact Information

- Lisa Bartlett - Special Olympics Athletic Director (SOAD) for Northern Lights
- Jenny Simpson - Shining Abilities Co-Founder/President
- Jessica Findley - Shining Abilities Co-Founder/Treasurer
- Nate Barney - nbarney@soill.onmicrosoft.com
 - Special Olympics Illinois Region B Manager

Schedules

Sport schedules will vary by sport and season. Each season, athletes will be given information on sports being offered, how to register, important dates, etc. Sports may vary by season, sports offerings will also be dependent on volunteer coaches, parent support, facility/space availability, etc. Special Olympics Illinois currently offers 18 different sports. Currently Northern Lights is not capable of offering all 18 sports, but when possible, Northern Lights will share information about sports offerings through other local agencies and organizations to ensure athletes have plenty of sports options to choose from.

Sports Training

- It is important for your athlete to attend every practice.
- A parent/guardian or a responsible adult **MUST** stay at every practice. The volunteers are not responsible for supervision of athletes.
- Special Olympics requires all athletes **receive at least 8 hours of training with their registered agency** before they compete at the area competition.
- Athletes must attend test days for Special Olympics competitions or you will **NOT** be entered.
- If an athlete is registered for a team sport, they are making a commitment to their teammates and coaches to be at every practice, game, and compete at the tournament. If you will not be competing, you will not be able to participate in a team sport.
- If an athlete misses 2 or more practices and/or games before a Special Olympics Region B competition they will **NOT** be eligible to participate.

Tournaments

Northern Lights asks that all parents/guardians become a Class A Coach through Special Olympics Illinois. Anyone interested in coaching a sport should reach out to Lisa.

- If an athlete does not complete the required training period, they are not eligible to compete at Special Olympics Illinois Region B competition.
- Please note for team sports, that if an athlete misses a Special Olympics Region B competition and the team wins a gold medal and advances to compete at the state level, the athlete will not be eligible to compete with the team.
- Please note, if your athlete wins a gold medal and advances to a state level competition, it will be up to the family to cover the cost of travel, lodging, meals, etc. Depending on the number of athletes advancing and volunteers' availability, parents/guardians are required to fill in as coach at the competition. This is why Northern Lights asks that all parents/guardians with athletes competing with Special Olympics complete the Class A Coach forms.

Uniforms/Competition Attire

- We ask that all athletes wear Northern Lights t-shirts when representing Northern Lights at Special Olympics tournaments.
- Ideally, each season Northern Lights will open up a spirit wear shop for athletes and families to purchase Shining Abilities' Northern Lights apparel. Be sure to watch for information and pay close attention to dates when the shop does open. These shops give athletes and families a chance to stock up on apparel.
- When possible, Northern Lights will provide uniforms for competitions. Unless otherwise noted, the uniforms will be a rental and will need to be returned at the end of the season. Should a rental not be returned or if it is damaged, the athlete may be issued a fee to replace the uniform.
- Uniform care will be provided at the time the uniform is handed out.
- If no uniform is issued and the athlete does not have any Northern Lights apparel, we ask that athletes wear a plain black or white collared shirt. No other sports teams; Special Olympics or professional, will be allowed at tournaments.
- Remember, NO jeans at competitions!

Volunteers and Coaches

Northern Lights sports is a volunteer based program run through Shining Abilities, a non-profit organization. Shining Abilities does not employ any staff and relies solely on volunteers and parents/guardians for our Northern Lights programming. Along with a board of directors that volunteer their time to planning and organizing programs and resources for families within the community.

Fundraising

Northern Lights relies heavily on sponsorships, donations, and fundraising to cover the costs, and it is required to fundraise to participate in. Without the support of families participating in the fundraisers, Northern Lights sport will not be able to continue to grow.

Shining Abilities **Board of Directors**

Jenny Simpson - Co-Founder & President

Jessy Findley - Co-Founder & Treasurer

Tiffany Matthei - Secretary

Doug Bundy - Director

Linda Calmeyer - Director

Eric Dolence - Director

Deb Pogose - Director

Northern Lights
Special Olympics Athletic Directors (SOAD)

Lisa Bartlett

The more volunteer coaches and parent support we have the more sport programs we will be able to provide and offer. Northern Lights welcomes anyone interested in volunteering and/or coaching. All coaches will need to complete their Class A Volunteer forms through Special Olympics, which also includes a background check.

- Should an athlete or parent/guardian have a complaint about a volunteer, they should reach out to Jenny or Jessy. Remember all the coaches are volunteers and take time away from their families and personal life to support Northern Lights and the athletes.

Weather Guidelines

Games/tournaments may be canceled due to unsafe weather conditions. We will do our best to notify families as soon as possible in the event there is a cancellation.

Below you will find the Special Olympics Tournament inclement weather policy.

Heat Guidelines for all one-day events:

If any of the following conditions are forecasted or are reached during the event, then the event will be canceled and will **NOT** be rescheduled:

- Temperature above 95 degrees
- Heat index above 102 degrees
- The National Weather Service has issued a Heat Advisory or Warning for the time frame of the event.

Cold Guidelines for all one-day events:

The event will be canceled and **NOT** rescheduled:

- The temperature forecasted or reached during the event is 10 degrees below zero, whether it is temperature alone or temperature with wind chill figured in.
- The National Weather Service has issued a Wind Chill Advisory or Warning, Winter Storm Warning or Blizzard Warning for the day of the event.
- Authorities have issued driving advisories.

Lightning Guidelines:

If any of the following conditions exist, the event is suspended, and individuals are moved to a safe location:

- The facility lightning detection device provides an alert.
- If no lightning detection device, then the first flash of lightning or clap of thunder.
- Activity may not be resumed for 30 minutes after both the last sound of thunder and last flash of lightning.

Expectations for All

Along with Special Olympics, Northern Lights and Shining Abilities focuses on what athletes can do. We strive for sportsmanship, teamwork, and self-discipline in all areas of each sport.

Expectations for Coaches:

I agree to support and respect each athlete, official, and parent. I will teach proper technique and rules to the game. I will be prepared for every practice and game regarding content and equipment. I will notify players and parents of schedule changes and arrangements to be made. I will take all criticism constructively. I will be aware of the Parent and Player expectations and determine whether or not the parties are abiding by the corresponding contracts and take appropriate action.

Expectations of Spectators:

I agree to support the coaches and officials in teaching the overriding goals of good sportsmanship, teamwork, and self-discipline to the participating athletes. I agree to read and support the athletes' expectations below. I agree that when I attend practices and games to act as a role model. I will refrain from arguing with officials, criticizing athletes, or using loud or abusive language. I will remember that everyone involved is donating their time to provide opportunities to the athletes.

Expectations of Athletes:

I agree to cooperate with, and show respect for my coaches, fellow athletes, opponents, and officials during the season. I will not argue with officials nor use foul or abusive language. I will listen to and follow directions given by coaches. I will dress appropriately for all practices and games. I will let my coach know in advance if I'm going to miss a practice or game. I will let my coach know if I get hurt or injured. I understand if I do not follow the rules, I may be suspended from practice and/or tournaments.

State Level Tournaments

Special Olympics Illinois Region B tournaments are local tournaments that are usually within 1 hour drive. These tournaments will be held in Lake, McHenry, or Cook Counties. However, if an athlete or a team wins a gold medal at Region B tournament it qualifies them to advance to the state level of competition.

- Please note, if an athlete wins a gold medal and advances to a state level competition, it will be up to the family to cover the cost of travel, lodging, meals, etc. Depending on the number of athletes advancing and volunteers' availability, parents/guardians may need to fill in as coach at the competition. This is why Northern Lights asks that all parents/guardians with athletes competing with Special Olympics complete the Class A Coach forms.
- Please keep this in mind when registering for a team sport. If the athlete and family cannot make the commitment needed to compete at the state level, we ask that the athlete not register for a team sport. We would hate for a whole team to miss out on an opportunity if teammates are unable to compete and there are not enough players.



Northern Lights Sports Handbook 2025/2026

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read, understand, and agree to information provided in this handbook.

Athlete's Name

Athlete's Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian's Signature

Date

This page must be signed and returned before the Fall 2025 season begins.