
Supervision

1. Supervision

Special Olympics Ireland recommends a ratio of support at any training session and Area/ Regional Competitions/ Development Days of one volunteer/coach for every four athletes (1:4) with a minimum of two volunteers/coaches at all times. This ratio applies to training/ competition activities and also to the activities that facilitate participation such as access to locker or changing rooms before or after these sessions.

Activities which involve young people must have the appropriate supervision in line with best practice requirements. Athletes should expect, and have the right to, participate in a safe environment. Ratios depend on the nature of the activity, the age of the participants and any special needs of the group, a general guide is 1:8 for under 12 years of age and 1:10 for over 12 years of age, however Special Olympics recommends up to 1:4 depending on the situation.

It is recognised that the club may be required to increase or decrease this ratio taking the following considerations into account;

- A minimum of two (2) volunteers must be present at all times regardless of the athlete numbers. Particular attention should be paid to the time before and after session when people are arriving and being picked up.
- The club should seek to ensure that the gender of the athletes is considered when allocating volunteers, i.e. male volunteers with male athletes and female volunteers with female athletes, as is practical. In mixed gender groups, volunteers should also be a mix of genders
- The level of risk associated with the sport and or the additional needs/ability of the athlete/s may bring the ratio of volunteers to athletes lower, e.g. 1:2 or higher e.g. 1:6
- Some National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) have sports specific guidelines in place for coach: athlete ratio, e.g. swimming, kayaking. Where there is conflict between the NGB and Special Olympics on the coach: athlete ratio guidelines, the higher supervision ratio should apply.
- Coaches should avoid one to one situations with athletes; where it is needed to speak to an athlete individually this should be done in an open environment where others can see

It is the responsibility of the Head Coach of the sport, along with the Club Safeguarding Officer, to ensure training is conducted in a safe environment and adequate support is in place. Coaches should seek additional advice from parents/ guardians where applicable but remembering that safety is the number one priority. The objective of any session is for it to be safe and fun for all athletes and volunteers. Where adequate individual support is not possible due to the resources and expertise of the coaches and volunteers, it may not be possible for individual athletes to partake in club training or competitions.

2. Changing facilities

It may not always be possible to supervise these areas as they may be accessible by the public. When supervising changing areas there must be 2 volunteers of the appropriate gender who are vetted by Special Olympics Ireland and have attended the appropriate safeguarding training. The space should not be entered unless in a supervisory role unless there is an emergency reason for it. In this case the paramountcy principle applies and the athlete's need for protection comes first.

3. Away Trips and Overnight Stays

Athletes, volunteers and coaches who travel overnight to events, competitions and Games, expect that all practical safeguarding measures have been taken into consideration in planning, preparing

and executing travel and accommodation arrangements while they are away from their home. This includes having adequate supervision for the duration of the time they are away. A risk assessment should be complete by the organisers to ensure there is enough, and adequate, supervision; it may be necessary to take into account the additional needs coaches and volunteers may have when doing the risk assessment. Please refer to *Away Trips and Overnight Stays* guidance.

4. Missing and Found Person

It is important to have procedures in place in the event that a child or athlete/spectator with an intellectual disability is missing and/or found at an event or club session. Good communication between organisers, facilities and Gardaí / PSNI is essential in carrying out these procedures. PA announcements should not be made unless specifically requested by the Gardaí or PSNI.

a. Dealing with a missing person report

Child, athlete or spectator with intellectual disability

- Report is made to the Head Coach, Club Safeguarding Officer or Event Manager.
- To avoid putting a missing person at risk, members of the public should not be made aware of the incident.
- The Head Coach, Club Safeguarding Officer or Event Manager will:
 1. Ensure that all other athletes continue to be supervised appropriately (if applicable), while a search for the missing person is carried out. Never send other athletes or people under eighteen years of age to assist in the search for a missing child.
 2. Organise the remaining available responsible volunteers /adults to conduct a search of the surrounding area and allocate each individual/team to a specific area.
 3. Allocate an individual team to remain at the location where the report was received for 10 minutes with person who made the report, advising them that full search is in progress.
 4. Allocate an individual /team to remain at all exits where possible; to prevent the individual leaving the premises.
 5. At an event, the Event Manager will radio the Venue Communications Centre (VCC) and the VCC will make an all-call across the relevant radio channel with the missing person description.
 6. Request all those searching to report back within a short, specified time. Ensure those involved in the search have your contact phone number.
Reports from individual/teams in their specific area should go directly to the Head Coach, Club Safeguarding Officer or Event Manager who can update other parties in the search.
 7. If the missing person cannot be found after an initial search of the immediate surroundings, contact the individual's parents to advise them of the concern and reassure them that everything is being done to locate the missing person.
 8. Record the circumstances in which the person has gone missing and where they was last seen and prepare a detailed physical description of the individual, to include their hair and eye colour, approximate height and build and clothing they was wearing.
 9. Report the concern to the Gardaí / PSNI if the search is unsuccessful and no later than 20 minutes after the initial missing person report if the search is ongoing. Follow Gardaí / PSNI guidance if further action is recommended and maintain close contact with the Gardaí / PSNI.
 10. Ensure that you inform all those involved including the parents, searchers and Gardaí / PSNI when the missing person is located.
 11. Individual is handed over to person who made initial report.

12. Head Coach, Club Safeguarding Officer or Event Manager Incident Report Card and returns it to the Event Safety Officer or Club Safeguarding Officer at earliest opportunity.

Adults missing for less than 1 hour

- This procedure does not apply to reports of any adult missing/separated from friends/family for less than a period of one hour.
- In the above cases, attendees should be advised that they need to wait or look for the missing person themselves and that announcements cannot be made.
- If adult is missing for over 1 hour, the steps above also apply.

a. Dealing with a found person report

If a child, athlete or spectator with an intellectual disability is found or identifies themselves as lost; the following procedure will apply:

- Report is made to the Head Coach, Club Safeguarding Officer or Event Manager.
- The individual should not be escorted away from where they were found.
- The volunteer should remain in the area with the individual for 10 minutes (found person always to remain under direct supervision of a volunteer, and in view of at least one other adult volunteer).
- Establish the name of the athlete and the name of their coach / club / parent and if they have a contact number for their Coach or Club Safeguarding Officer or parent.
- Ask where they last saw their coach / team members / parent etc. and if they were trying to get to a specific area.
- Engage the athlete in general conversation with the aim of subtle distraction from the situation.
- Alert another volunteer and ask them to notify the coach / event manager. An announcement may be made on the PA to ask the coach / parent to go to a specific location.

To avoid putting the found person at risk, members of the public should not be made aware of the incident.

- The coach / parent should immediately proceed to the location of the athlete.
- Alternatively the Head Coach, Club Safeguarding Officer or Event Manager will discreetly inform their team members, who then carry out search for coach / guardian.
- Ensure that all other athletes continue to be supervised appropriately (if applicable), while a search is carried out. Never send other athletes or people under eighteen years of age to assist in the search.
- Organise the remaining available responsible volunteers /adults to conduct a search of the surrounding area and allocate each individual/team to a specific area.
- Report the concern to the Gardaí / PSNI if the search is unsuccessful and no later than 20 minutes after the initial found person report, if the search for coach/guardian is ongoing.
- Ensure that you inform all those involved including the parents, searchers and Gardaí / PSNI when the missing person is located.
- Individual is handed over to their coach / guardian. At all times the comfort and wellbeing of the individual must be of paramount concern. If the person appears unwilling to be reunited with an individual proof of identify may be requested or consider contacting the Gardaí / PSNI for further advice.
- Head Coach, Club Safeguarding Officer or Event Manager Incident Report Card and returns it to the Event Safety Officer or Club Safeguarding Officer at earliest opportunity.

13. Dealing with an Unsupervised Athlete leaving a venue

If a volunteer notices an unaccompanied athlete attempting to leave the club's training / activity venue or event; they should:

- Establish the name of the athlete and the name of their coach / club
- Ask if the athlete is lost or needs directions to a specific area within the building e.g. toilets
- Alert another volunteer and ask them to notify the coach / event manager
- Stay with the athlete and ask another volunteer to alert the coach / event manager.
- Engage the athlete in general conversation with the aim of subtle distraction from the intention to leave the venue.
- The coach should immediately proceed to the location of the athlete.
- All other coaches should ensure all other athletes are appropriately supervised.
- Athlete is reunited with coach and returns to join their team / club.
- If athlete refuses to engage the volunteer in conversation and proceeds to leave venue, the volunteer should alert the coach / event manager by phone / radio to inform of urgency of coach's attendance and to describe the direction taken by the athlete on leaving the venue.
- The coach is responsible for following athlete and returning them to the safety of their team / club.