

# 2026 USA Games: Minnesota

June 20-26, 2026

**Special Olympics**  
Iowa



# Overview



- Application process
- Sports
- Athlete expectations
- Parent/Caregiver expectations
- Coach expectations

# Application Process



- Applications will be released April 1, 2025
- Applications will be due June 6, 2025
- Selections will be made June 20, 2025

# Sports



- Track & Field (2 males, 2 females, 1 coach)
- Swimming (2 males, 2 females, 1 coach)
- Bocce (2 male athlete, 2 female athlete, 1 coach)
- Bowling (2 male athlete, 2 female athlete, 1 coach)
- Tennis (4 athletes, 1 coach)
- Pickleball (1 male athlete, 1 male UP, 1 female athlete, 1 female UP, 1 coach)
- Powerlifting (2 males, 2 females, 1 coach)
- 5-on-5 Basketball (1 male/mixed traditional team, 3 coaches)
- Team Volleyball (1 male/mixed traditional team, 3 coaches)



# All Participant Expectations

## Length of Games

- The 2026 USA Games will be in Minnesota. The Special Olympics Iowa Delegation will depart of Minneapolis/St. Paul on June 19, 2026 and return to Iowa on June 27, 2026. Athletes, Unified Partners and Coaches will be required to be there for that duration.

## Travel and Long Days

- Team Iowa transportation to the USA Games will likely be on a bus from Iowa to Minnesota. Athletes must be able to withstand long days of travel and lots of walking during the games.

# Athlete and Unified Partner Expectations



- Must be in good standing with the Athlete Code of Conduct
- Must receive 1<sup>st</sup> place in their sport during the 24-25 sport season
- Must be able to complete activities of daily living independently (shower, dress, eat, etc.)
- Will not have one-on-one supervision or coaching
- Athletes must be able to share living space with other team members.
- 16 years old is the age minimum

# Athlete and Unified Partner Expectations



- Will be housed with Team Iowa member in assigned housing at camps and the USA Games
- Will not be allowed to travel with or stay with family members, guardians, local coaches, etc to or during the USA Games
- Will attend required training camps if held
- Will attend required meetings and uniform fittings

# Athlete and Unified Partner Expectations



## Adjusting to New Coaches

- Coaches selected for the SOIA delegation come from all across the state and it is rare for an athlete to already know one of the coaches. Athletes and Unified partners must function as part of a team, including group living and following coaching instructions from unfamiliar coaches.



# Athlete and Unified Partner Expectations



## Food/diet

- While accommodations are made for dietary restrictions such as diabetes, gluten-free, etc. special considerations should be expected for “picky” eaters. Often athletes will dine in settings which involve planned meals served to the group and while there will often be choices, it will be limited to.

# Time Away from Parents/Family



- Because of the structure of the USA Games, athletes chosen can expect to be away from their families for extended periods of time without seeing them and at times, with very limited contact. For some athletes this can cause stress and anxiety.

# Parent/Caregiver Expectations



- Assist in communication leading up to the games
- Encourage independence of athletes
- Note: Only official members of Team Iowa are allowed on campus



# Coach Expectations

- Must have a current Class A
- Be certified in the sport(s) they apply for
- Be certified in advanced training “Coaching Special Olympics Athletes”
- Number of years coaching the sport(s) they apply for will be taken into consideration
- Oversee athletes during the week of competition
- Will be housed with Team Iowa members in assigned housing during the USA Games



# Coach Expectations

- Will not be allowed travel with or stay with family or friends to or during the USA Games.
- Coaches must function as part of a team, including group living.
- Will attend required training camps if held
- Will attend required meetings and uniform fittings

# Questions?



## 2026 USA Games Website

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