



The health and safety of all Special Olympics participants is of paramount importance to Special Olympics Maine (SOME). Participants should feel that every Special Olympics event is a safe and positive experience.

Arranging housing for overnight events involves the consideration of a variety of factors, including the varying abilities, ages and behaviors of athletes, the availability of housing and the costs associated with overnight accommodations. The following policy has been adopted by SOME for sanctioned events: (Note: the word “chaperone” is used throughout this document – wherever used, it will include ALL SOME head coaches/coaches/volunteers involved in the situations described within)

POLICY REQUIREMENTS

- 1.) **Gender** – Athletes and volunteers may not share a room with an athlete or volunteer of the opposite sex. The following exceptions may be allowed:
 - a. Married athletes who are both attending the event as members of a registered delegation. This exception does not apply to the spouse of an athlete who is not participating in the event, but attending solely as a spectator.
 - b. Married volunteers who are both attending the event as members of a registered delegation. This exception does not apply if one of the volunteers is required to share a room with an athlete (other than the married couple’s child), as this scenario will create a situation whereby an athlete is housed with a volunteer of the opposite sex.
 - c. Family members of the opposite sex who serve as a one-to-one chaperone for the related athlete.
 - d. Housing in a facility that has multiple private rooms in addition to living space (such as a condominium or dormitory). Both males and females may be assigned to one condominium, if necessary, but private rooms may not be shared by individuals of the opposite sex. Chaperones must also be housed in the condominium and the chaperone/athlete ratio (as outlined in the supervision section of the policy) must be maintained.
 - e. Use of barracks or other facility (such as a gym) where a large number of individuals are assigned to one room. Athletes and volunteers must be separated as much as possible by gender (for example, females on one side of the gym and males on the other side).
- 2.) **Supervision** - The chaperone/athlete ratio of at least one properly registered chaperone to every four athletes (1:4) must be maintained during overnight events. Proper supervision can be maintained without having a chaperone present in the room at all times. All chaperones must be screened in accordance with the SOME (Level A) Volunteer Screening Policy.
- 3.) **Young Athletes** – Young Athletes events that involve overnight activities require increased supervision and therefore, Young Athletes participants must be accompanied by a properly registered and screened parent, guardian or an individual designated by a parent or guardian at all overnight activities. The parent, guardian or designated individual must also be compliant with the other requirements of this policy. Rooming assignments for Young Athletes should be separate from the remainder of the delegation, whenever possible (for example, separate hotel rooms).

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- 4.) **Acknowledgment** – Utilizing the Athlete Medical Form, SOME will secure a parent’s/guardian’s signature acknowledging they are aware that SOME has a policy relative to housing arrangements and that the policy is available on the SOME website. Athletes who are legally responsible for themselves are permitted to provide acknowledgment on their own behalf.
- New athletes (athletes registering for the first time after January 1, 2014) must be notified, as outlined above, that SOME has a housing policy at the time of their initial registration.
 - Existing athletes (athletes registered on or prior to December 31, 2013) must be notified, as outlined above, that SOME has a housing policy no later than the due date of each athlete’s next athlete medical (regardless of whether or not such notification is provided via the athlete medical renewal due date).
- 5.) **Policy Implementation** – This policy is in place for any SOME event (competitive or non-competitive) that requires overnight housing for SOME athletes. The implementation will be the responsibility of all chaperones involved, as well as the event coordinator.
- 6.) **Best Practices**—Chaperones are encouraged to incorporate the following best practices:
- a. **Rooming Assignments** – If athletes will be sharing a room, following is a list of other items to consider when making room assignments:
 - i. Consider matching athletes based on size, level of maturity, ability and age.
 - ii. Assign connecting rooms to those athletes who require additional assistance or supervision if the chaperone will not be in the same room.
 - b. **Sleeping Arrangements** – Whenever possible, each member of the delegation should be assigned his/her own bed. If bed sharing is required, an athlete may not share a bed with a chaperone unless the chaperone is a parent or sibling of the athlete and has been screened in compliance with the Special Olympics U.S. Volunteer Screening Policy. The following techniques should be considered to help reduce the number of athletes required to share beds:
 - i. Request cots from the facility to increase the number of beds available.
 - ii. Utilize air mattresses to increase the number of beds available (check with facility to ensure there is not a policy against the use of air mattresses).
 - iii. If bed sharing is required, Programs may consider having athletes pack sleeping bags and require athletes to sleep in his/her sleeping bag on top of the linens that are provided.
 - c. **Supervision** - The following includes suggestions for providing athlete housing supervision:
 - i. **Hotels** – Whenever possible, reserve connecting rooms so that chaperones have direct access to the athletes’ room(s). If connecting rooms are not available and the chaperone is in a room separate from the athletes for which he/she is responsible:
 1. Ensure that the chaperone has a key to the athletes’ room(s)
 2. Ensure that the athletes know how to reach the chaperone at all times
 3. Consider using hall monitors
 - ii. **Condo/Dorm (or other facility with multiple private rooms)** – Whenever possible, leave the doors to private rooms open so that chaperones can monitor each room.
 - iii. **Barracks (or other facility with a large number of beds in one room)** – Whenever possible, chaperones should be assigned to a location in close proximity to the athletes he/she is supervising.
 - d. **Family Members** – Prohibit family members from staying in athlete housing unless the family member is an official member of the registered delegation and is screened in compliance with the SOME (Level A) Volunteer Screening Policy.