



## Paralympics and Unified Track & Field Information

### History

Since 2015, Para events have been included in the SSA Track & Field Provincial Championships. Para events began to transition from demonstration events to scoring events at the 2016 Provincial Track and Field Championships. In 2016, a Special Olympics Unified Sports Relay was added and over the years has progressed today to a Unified Championship Event that consists of a Long Jump, Turbo Javelin and 2x200m Relay.

### Para Athletics

Para Athletics is a **competitive** opportunity for individual athletes with a physical and/or intellectual disability to compete in track and field events. Para Athletics includes both standing and seated events for participants with physical disabilities. All SSA Provincial Championships that include Para events follow rules set by Athletics Canada.

The events that a para-athlete compete in are:

*(Note: these individual events contribute to your school team total points)*

- Shot put
- 100m
- 200m

More information on Para Athletics can be found on the [Athletics Canada website](#).

### Special Olympics Unified Sports

Unified Sports is a branch of the Special Olympics where people with and without intellectual disabilities train and compete on the same team, promoting inclusion, friendship and community.

A Unified Team consists of one athlete (individual with an intellectual disability) and one partner (individual without an intellectual disability)

The events that a Unified Team compete in are:

- Long jump
- Turbo Javelin (500g long)
- 2 x 200m Relay

*(Note: The Unified team points do not contribute to the school team totals. A Unified Team competes for its own championship banner)*

**Below are some of the most frequently asked questions about Para Athletics and the Unified Combined Event that we receive at the School Sport Alberta office.**

## FAQ's

1. Who can be a Para Athlete in Track and Field?
2. Who are a Special Olympics Unified Athlete? Partner?
3. What is the Unified Combined event? Where can I find more information about this event?
4. How does a Para or Unified athlete qualify for Provincials?
5. How do I register as a Para or Unified athlete?
6. Can other Para events be added to Provincials?
7. How does the scoring work?
8. Do my ambulatory athletes have to use the starting blocks?
9. Can I run with my athlete who has an intellectual disability?
10. What weight of shot-put do Para athletes throw?
11. How will Para and Unified athletes be grouped for events?
12. How are Para and Unified medals awarded at SSA Provincials?
13. What if an athlete in a wheelchair does not have the right type of chair to use on the track?

### 1. Who can be a Para Athlete in Track & Field?

Students with various physical and/or intellectual disabilities may qualify for the Paralympic Track & Field events. The major classification groups can be found in the attached flyer. Note that the purpose of this chart is to provide you with a broader image of who can participate in para.

Students can either be registered as a Para athlete OR a Unified athlete, but not both.

Athletes who partner with a Unified athlete can only compete as a Unified partner and only one other individual event if they qualify. It is best to choose partners who do not compete in track meets for their own individual events.

*Please note that coaches are not expected to identify a specific classification for their athlete beyond the categories listed below.* Athlete classification usually takes place at Development Camps and is done by people who are trained to do so.

For the purpose of SSA Track & Field Provincial Championships, students will be grouped in one the following four categories of classifications: (T = Track | F = Field)

- **Para Vision** - Athletes with Visual Impairments – T/F 11-13
- **Para Intellectual** - Athletes with Intellectual Disabilities – T/F 20
- **Para Ambulatory**
  - Athletes with Cerebral Palsy – T/F 35-38
  - Athletes with An Amputation & Les Autres
    - Short Stature – F 40-41
    - Lower Limb Amputees – T/F 42-44
    - Upper Limb Amputees – T/F/45-47
- **Para WC/Para Seated** - Athletes who compete in a Wheelchair - T/F 51-54, F 55-58, F 32-33, T/F 44

### 2. Who is a Special Olympics Unified Athlete? Partner?

A Special Olympics Unified Sports team is made up of athletes and partners. Athletes are students with intellectual disabilities; partners are students without intellectual disabilities. Students with physical disabilities will be classified as either an athlete or a partner, depending on whether or not they also have an intellectual disability.

### 3. What is the Unified Championship Banner event? Where can I find more information about this event?

The Unified Combined Championship event is a combined event that was first trialed at the 2019 and 2020 SSA Track & Field Provincial Championships. This event replaced the 4x100m Unified Relay that was held in previous years which offers multiple events for the Unified team to compete in.

### 4. How does a Para or Unified athlete qualify for Provincials?

All athletes must meet SSA Eligibility Criteria (page 39-48 in the SSA Policy Handbook). Each Zone can send the following number of Unified and Para competitors:

- Unified Combined Event Teams: a maximum of three teams qualify per zone. If zones do not fill their berth additional teams may be entered
- Para Intellectual Athletes: schools can submit a maximum of four athletes per gender per event in their zone. The top two in the zone qualify for provincials.
- All Other Para Athletes: no maximum number that can be sent per zone, however if there are more than two athletes from the same school in the same classification and in the same event, only the top two will score points.

If a zone is unable to fill their berths for the Unified teams or Para Intellectual athletes, another zone may send extra teams/athletes (with permission from the SSA office). The extra teams/athletes will be marked as exhibition competitors and will not be eligible to win medals and/or the Unified Championship banner.

### 5. How do I register a Para athlete or Unified team?

All Para athletes and Unified teams must be registered through the same process as all other Provincial Track and Field competitors via your Zone Secretary, and by the deadline noted by your zone.

### 6. Can other Para events be added to Provincials?

To add a Para event, a Notice of Motion must be proposed to the Board of Governors. Additional Para events will not be added as one-off events for individual students; the event must be open for all Para competitors. For more information on adding activities, see page 67 of the SSA Policy Handbook.

### 7. How does the scoring work?

Scoring for Para Athletics is subject to the following scale, dependent on the number of competitors in each event and at each classification:

Events with 5 or less competitors:

Placement:	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
Points:	8	6	4	3	2

Events with 6-10 competitors:

Placement:	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>
Points:	16	14	12	10	8	6	4	3	2	1

Events with 10 or more competitors:

Placement:	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>t</sup>
Points:	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Scores from the Unified Banner events will only be used to calculate the winner of the Unified Banner; these scores will not be added to the school totals. A Multi-Event Combined Scoring Formula will be used to award scores for the team event.

When competing in Turbo Javelin and Long Jump, the athletes and partner will each get 3 attempts. Each player's best distance will be used for their team score. Because some distance may not make the minimum distance in the online scoring system, we have adjusted the scoring template.

Ex: Athletes best jump is 2.5m, the partners best jump was 4.0m, their team total would be 6.5m

For the 2 x 200m relay, the team's final race time will be ranked to allocate a score under the Heptathlon scoring system.

#### **8. Do my ambulatory athletes have to use starting blocks?**

No, your athlete may choose whether or not to use the starting blocks. There is no penalty for choosing not to use the starting blocks. A Unified Partner is expected to use starting blocks.

#### **9. Can I run with my athlete who has an intellectual disability?**

No, the SSA adheres to Athletics Canada rules stating that only athletes who are visually impaired may have a guide runner. A coach may not be on the track but may run "off the track" alongside the athlete as long as they are not interfering with the race, officials, or any other event, as this would offer an athlete an unfair advantage against other contestants.

#### **10. What weight of a shot-put do Para athletes throw with?**

Athletics Canada requires different shot-put weights for the different classifications and age groups of Para athletes. For simplicity purposes at SSA events, female Para athletes use a 3kg shot put; male Para athletes use a 4kg shot put (see page 144 of the SSA Policy Handbook).

Athletes may choose to throw a heavier shot-put weight to match what is indicated by Athletics Canada for their classification and age group but may not throw a lighter shot-put weight than what is listed in SSA policy at SSA events.

#### **11. How will Para and Unified athletes be grouped for events?**

Para athletes will be grouped by classification and gender. Athletes will not be grouped by age (junior, intermediate, and senior) until the SSA deems there is an appropriate number of contestants to do so. For example, a grade 10 male in the seated shot-put event will compete against grade 11 and grade 12 males in the same classification, etc.

#### **12. How are Para and Unified medals awarded at SSA Provincials?**

Medals will be awarded for each event and classification, but not per age category. This means, for example, only one set of medals will be awarded in the male category for an event even if there are athletes from more than one age category competing. As noted in question #11, once it is determined that there are sufficient athletes competing in each category, consideration will be given to separating the athletes into age categories for both medals and points scoring.

#### **13. What if an athlete in a wheelchair does not have the right type of chair to use on the track?**

The SSA successfully received grant funding from the Canadian Tire Jumpstart Initiative and the Grassroots Sport Innovation Challenge to purchase racing chairs, gloves, indoor rollers, and seated frames. This equipment is available to borrow throughout the athletics season but will require a deposit and consent form signed by the athlete's guardian and the school the athlete is representing.

This equipment will be shared at the Provincial Championships.

**Note: All athletes racing in wheelchairs must wear a helmet.**

Please contact Deryk Venance (SSA) or Cassie Shaw with Special Olympics Alberta for more information on borrowing equipment. As we are transporting equipment, we will only bring chairs in the sizes that we know are needed for Provincials. Please be sure to notify SSA ahead of time that a chair is needed, otherwise a chair may not be provided in the correct size.

Contact the Unified Sports Program Manager with any further questions on Track and Field on qualifying and competing in SSA Provincials.

**Unified Sports Program Manager**

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