

2023 Sport Season Changes FAQ

Updated 11/09/2022

Why did SOWI realign sport seasons?

Special Olympics Wisconsin periodically evaluates program services to identify measures to improve. As 2022 brought about SOWI's 50th Anniversary, the committee worked hard to imagine what the *next* 50 years of Special Olympics Wisconsin will look like and how program offerings will continue to evolve. SOWI began this process more than three years ago, using input from Special Olympics Wisconsin programs, athletes, and volunteers and identified a variety of challenges affecting SOWI's future.

- **Changing Scope of Athlete Participation:** The average age of SOWI athletes has increased. And as athletes age, they often retire from high impact and intense cardiovascular sports. In response, SOWI has worked to incorporate low impact sports like Bocce, Cornhole, and Bowling throughout the year to provide opportunities for aging and senior athletes.
- **Athlete Experience:** From athlete feedback, the increase in single-day State competitions led to fewer opportunities for athletes—from experiencing opening ceremonies and dances with fellow athletes from across the state to integral non-sport components like Healthy Athletes. More multi-day events allows for these aspects to be included to provide a better athlete experience.
- **State Games Venues:** Keeping our athletes at the forefront, the evaluation of some State Games venues identified outdated competition facilities that were no longer safe, decreased availability in housing, and limited room to grow participation numbers.
- **New & Supplemental Programming:** Programs that Special Olympics Wisconsin offers has grown tremendously over the years. With the shift in seasons, we hope to offer more non-sport programs including SOFit, Young Athletes, Senior Athletes, and Unified Leadership opportunities.

How did you select venues for State Games?

During the three-year process to re-evaluate SOWI's sports season offerings, the committee focused heavily on State Tournament locations. The following steps were taken to insure no stone was left unturned:

- a. Developed criteria to evaluate State Games facilities based on the following:
 - Appropriate facilities for competition
 - Appropriate facilities for Healthy Athletes and supplemental events
 - Appropriate overnight accommodations on-site or near competition
 - Community involvement potential for volunteers and LETR
 - Market size for potential sponsorship opportunities
 - Ability to host events following the Gold Star Standard (a standard developed in 2019 to insure all SOWI events be consistently high-quality across the state and all levels of competition)
- b. Created a list of potential venues in Wisconsin including universities, colleges, high schools, and private facilities.
- c. Attended site visits for venues that met initial criteria developed in Step A.
- d. Ranked site visits based on criteria developed in Step A.
- e. Selected and finalized State Games facilities and new annual calendar.

The State Games venues were carefully selected and have the potential to grow and adapt with SOWI's evolving participation over the next 50 years.

How did you decide to combine certain sports?

The committee used the four sports of highest participation as seasonal pillars, identified as Team Basketball (Spring Games), Track & Field (Summer Games), Bocce (Fall Games), and Bowling. After identifying top-notch facilities across the state, the committee used the highest-rated venues to help guide sport season groupings. Many sports naturally fit together based on SOWI's previous sport season calendar and appropriate competition sites at the new State Games Facilities. The committee also looked at multi-sport athlete data from 2019 in hopes to mitigate as much overlap as possible.

What are the new season medical deadlines?

Winter	January 1	Alpine Skiing & Snowboard Cross Country Skiing Snowshoe
Spring	February 1	Basketball Swimming
Summer	April 15	Cornhole Gymnastics Powerlifting Soccer Tennis Track & Field
Fall	July 1	Golf
	July 15	Bocce Ball Flag Football Softball Tee Ball
	October 1	Bowling Volleyball

When and where will all tournament dates be posted?

As regional, district, and sectional events are confirmed they will be posted on the [SOWI Website Calendar](#). The Sports Offered pages will be updated to reflect the new sport seasons in early December after the conclusion of State Bowling.

When can athletes begin practicing for the new sport seasons?

As we transition into the new sport seasons, SOWI intends to place heavy focus on fitness and appropriate training. Athletes should receive a minimum of eight weeks of training before attending a State Competition. However, Local Programs and coaches may decide to start practicing earlier than eight weeks prior to competition.

Can athletes participate in more than one sport per season?

Yes, athletes can compete in more than one sport per season. However, due to scheduling conflicts, there are some restrictions. Athletes cannot compete in sports that advance to the same State Games. The only exception would be if said sport is scheduled for a single day of a multi-day competition.

WINTER SEASON

Athletes can only compete in one sport.

SPRING SEASON

<i>SPORT</i>	<i>MULTI-SPORT OPTIONS</i>
3v3 Basketball	Swimming
Basketball Skills	Swimming
Team Basketball	--
Swimming	3v3 Basketball or Basketball Skills

SUMMER SEASON

<i>SPORT</i>	<i>MULTI-SPORT OPTIONS</i>
Cornhole	Powerlifting or Tennis
Gymnastics	Powerlifting or Tennis
Powerlifting	Cornhole or Gymnastics
Soccer	--
Track & Field	--
Tennis	Cornhole or Gymnastics

FALL SEASON

<i>SPORT</i>	<i>MULTI-SPORT OPTIONS</i>
Bocce	Bowling or Golf or Volleyball
Bowling	Bocce or Flag Football or Golf or Softball or Tee Ball or Volleyball
Flag Football	Bowling or Golf or Tee Ball or Volleyball
Golf	All other sports
Softball	Bowling or Golf or Volleyball
Tee Ball	Bowling or Flag Football or Golf or Volleyball
Volleyball	Bocce or Bowling or Flag Football or Golf or Softball or Tee Ball

Why is bowling league continuing?

SOWI is currently committed to offering the bowling league in 2023. While we recognize this cannot be the long-term structure of Bowling, we need more time to evaluate the best way to offer it amidst the changing landscape of availability around the state. As bowling alleys across the state continue to close, many regions do not have appropriate facilities to host largescale events that SOWI would require at any level.

SOWI will take the next year to explore options and game-plan for what comes next.

What additional support will SOWI provide to Local Programs during the transition to the new sport seasons?

Travel Grant: Special Olympics Wisconsin will now offer a Travel Grant for Local Programs traveling more than 100 miles to attend a Regional, District, Sectional, or State Competition. Local Programs may request up to \$40 per registered delegate (coach/chaperone/athlete) to supplement travel costs, lodging, and meals while attending a SOWI competition.

Invitational Competition Grant: Special Olympics Wisconsin offers an Invitational Competition Grant to support local programs interested in hosting an invitational for team sports. If you are interested in hosting an Invitational please contact your local Athletic Director.

Preseason Coaches Meetings: SOWI will host Preseason Coaches Meetings at the start of each sports season to provide information about sports and upcoming tournaments. [Register online](#) to attend the Coaches Meetings.

Winter + Spring Preseason Coaches Meeting: Thursday, January 12, 2022 at 7:00pm

Summer Preseason Coaches Meeting: Thursday, March 9, 2023 at 7:00pm

Fall Preseason Coaches Meeting: Thursday, June 22, 2023 at 7:00pm

Bowling + Volleyball Preseason Coaches Meeting: Thursday, September 21, 2023 at 7:00pm