ARTICLE 35

UNIFIED SPORTS AND ACTIVITIES

35.1 **UNIFIED SPORTS** is a joint effort between the Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA) and Special Olympics Arizona (SOAZ) to incorporate Unified programs in AIA member schools recognizing and offering opportunities for SOAZ unified athletes and partners to compete in AIA sanctioned athletics and activities. Unified programs shall be administered by each participating member school and follow the requirements per AIA Bylaws for eligibility, rules and program administration, unless otherwise stated below.

35.2 **ELIGIBILITY** – All participants must adhere to the Physical Examination Rule (Article 15, Section 7) and complete the appropriate pre-participation packet per the AIA Executive Board as recommended by the AIA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee. All students participating in Unified Sports shall utilize the forms provided by the AIA, which include four parts:

- Part One – Annual Preparticipation Physical Evaluation (See Form 15.7-A)
- Part Two – Annual Preparticipation Physical Examination (See Form 15.7-B)
- Part Three – Annual Preparticipation Acknowledgement (See Form 15.7-C)
- Part Four – Unified Sports Participant Release (See Form 15.7-E)

All participants must adhere to the Parent or Legal Guardian Consent Rule (Article 15, Section 8) and shall have on file with the principal or his/her designee appropriate permission in which the parent or legal guardian authorized participation.

35.2.1 Unified Athlete Eligibility

35.2.1.1 Any enrolled student with an intellectual disability who meets both the Unified Athlete eligibility statement outlined below and all requirements of the AIA and school district clearance policy shall be eligible to participate as an SOAZ unified athlete:

35.2.1.1.1 A person is considered to have intellectual disabilities for purposes of determining his or her eligibility to participate in Unified Sports ® if that person satisfies any one of the following requirements:

- The person has been identified by an agency or professional has having intellectual disabilities as determined by their localities; or
- The person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures such as intelligent quotient or "IQ" testing or other measures which are generally accepted within the professional community in that accredited program's state as being a reliable measurement of the existence of a cognitive delay; or
- The person has a "closely related development disability" meaning the individual has functional limitations in both general learning (such as IQ) and in adaptive skills (such as in recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care).

NOTE: Person whose functional limitations are based solely on a physical behavioral, or emotional disability, or a specific learning or sensory disability, are not eligible to participate as Special Olympics athletes, but may be eligible to participate as a unified partner.

35.2.1.1.2 In order to further participation in the Unified Sports initiative, participation by SOAZ unified athletes will have the following exceptions to AIA eligibility requirements:

- Exception to the **Enrollment Rule** and **Domicile Rule** (Article 15, Section 3.1 and 5): SOAZ unified athletes may participation in a cooperative program among member schools for the purposes of creating combined school teams.
- Exception to the Academic Rule (Article 15, Section 4.1): SOAZ unified athletes participating will follow the guidelines as set forth in their individual educational plans (IEP).
- Exception to the Age Limit Rule (Article 15, Section 6): SOAZ unified athletes will be eligible per age limitations of SOAZ and AIA rules for Unified Sports and activities.
- Exception to the Maximum Participation Rule (Article 15, Section 4.1): SOAZ unified athletes shall be eligible to participate as long as they are enrolled at a member high school.
- Exception to the Concussion Education Rule (Article 15, Section 14.4): SOAZ unified athletes shall be accommodated in accordance with the guidelines set forth in their individual educational plans (IEP) when completing the required Brainbook online concussion education course. All SOAZ unified athletes must complete the course in his/her own name.

35.2.2 Unified Partner Eligibility

35.2.2.1 Any enrolled student who meets all requirements of the AIA and school district eligibility and clearance policy is eligible to participate as a Unified Partner in the AIA Unified Sports.

35.2.2.1.1 INDIVIDUAL SPORTS – Any student participating in an individual sport (i.e. Swim, Track & Field) ***IS*** eligible to participate as a Unified Partner in the same sport, **EXCEPT** during the following circumstances:

- Any sanctioned state qualifier at which the student is attempting to qualify for advancement to a state championship in any non-Unified event.
- Any state championship at which the student is competing in any non-Unified events.

35.2.2.1.2 TEAM SPORTS – Any student participating in a team sport (i.e. Flag Football and Basketball) at the **varsity level** at any time during the season is ***NOT*** eligible to compete as a Unified Partner in the ***same sport***.

- Example – a varsity soccer player *CANNOT* compete on the Unified Soccer team.
- Example – a varsity soccer player *CAN* compete on the Unified Basketball team.

35.3 RULES AND SANCTIONING – Official rules and regulations for all Unified Sports and Activities shall be those published by the AIA Special Olympics Arizona prior to each season, as approved by the AIA Executive Board.

- The following sports are sanctioned as ***competitive Unified Sports***: Badminton, Basketball, Football (Flag), Floorball, Golf, Soccer, Softball, Swimming, and Track and Field and Volleyball.
- The following sports are ***sanctioned as recreational Unified*** Sports: Bocce
- The following sports are ***sanctioned as Unified Activities***: Robotics, Spiritline, ESports

35.4 PRACTICE – Prior to participation in an interscholastic contest or tournament, all Unified Sports players must complete a minimum of eight (8) practices each of which shall be at least sixty (60) minutes in duration. Practices shall be held at least once a week throughout the duration of the sports season.

35.5 NONSCHOOL PARTICIPATION – Participation by SOAZ unified athletes and partners will have the following exception in regards to the Nonschool Participation Rule (Article 14, Section 4):

35.5.1 Students participating in interscholastic sports are allowed to concurrently participate in outside SOAZ sports programming.

- Example – A unified athlete participating on his/her high school Unified Basketball team can also participate on a city or community-based Unified Basketball team.