



National Invitational Tournament (NIT) Travel Guidelines

Special Olympics Maryland – Montgomery County (SOMO)

The National Invitational Tournament (NIT) provides a development opportunity for the Special Olympic athlete that extends beyond the normal in-state competitions. Team travel provides an excellent team-building opportunity. NITs are optional, extracurricular athletic events. Participating athletes must agree to abide by team rules for the duration of the event, including team travel.

Adherence to the following guidelines will help to set expectations and improve the travel experience:

- In the absence of a defined Head of Delegation (HOD), the head coach will act as HOD
 - Head Coach is responsible for the delegation at all times, beginning with the agreed upon team departure point and time, e.g., airport lobby at 9:00 AM
 - Head Coach will determine athlete assignments and other duties for chaperones
- Team should travel as a unit, e.g., block of tickets that cover official delegation
 - In the event of flight cancellation or delay, group ticketing will ensure delegation remains intact
 - Team stays in team lodging with Head Coach and chaperones
 - Team eats their meals together as a team
- Family members are encouraged to attend NIT events as spectators (except for family members that are approved delegation members serving as coaches or chaperones).
 - Family members generally travel independently to NIT destination on flights of their choosing.
 - Family members arrange their own lodging at NIT destination
 - Family members local travel at destination is generally independent of the team's local travel
- Head Coach and assistant coaches serve as primary chaperones during travel and while staying in hotels
 - Exception: Athletes may be formally "signed out" to parent/guardian during idle time while on travel at the discretion of the Head Coach. The Head Coach is not required to permit "sign-outs."
 - While signed out, parent/guardian is responsible for athlete's meals and well-being
 - Parents/Guardians must return the athlete to team lodging no later than the team's bedtime as determined by the Head Coach.
- Must maintain a minimum 4:1 (athlete-to-chaperone) ratio at all times
 - Head Coach will determine chaperone assignments
 - Head Coach is responsible for athletes' medicals at all times
 - Controlled substance medications, e.g., Ritalin, must be counted and should be carried in original prescription container
 - Athlete will be responsible to hold and manage medications for the duration of the trip



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- If possible, head coach should be exempted from direct chaperone duties
 - To Ensure availability for coaches' meetings
 - To Oversee overall team-related logistics
- Cost and coverage of travel meals should be determined in advance
 - Tax exempt forms should be used for team meals and all team-related expenditures
 - This will save SOMO 5%, or more
 - Athletes should be advised in advance what expenditures (including meals) to expect and approximately how much cash will be needed
- All members of delegation must have appropriate (government issued) ID or passport

Hotels

- Athletes are not allowed to leave rooms after "lights-out"
- Other than assigned athletes, only the assigned chaperone is permitted in room
- As a matter of privacy for other athletes in the room, parents and others are not permitted in athlete's room
- Chaperone is advised to keep door open while visiting an athlete's room
- Members of delegation are not allowed in hotel swimming pools **at any time**; see SOMO Recreational Swim Policy
- Smoking and alcohol consumption are prohibited at all times

Best practices

- Athletes should wear credentials at all times (when not competing)
- When possible, "stronger" athletes should be paired with athletes who may need more assistance
- Athletes should have Head Coach and chaperone contact information with them for the duration of the trip. This is often accomplished by adding the chaperone and Head Coach to the athlete's mobile phone address book.