



## Special Olympics Pennsylvania Interscholastic Unified Sports®

Special Olympics PA Interscholastic Unified Sports® (IUS) is a fully-inclusive co-ed after school high school sports program which successfully brings together students with and without intellectual disabilities. They train and compete as equal teammates and through this experience, become friends. IUS teams are regarded like every other interscholastic sports team at the high school.

IUS is part of Unified Champion Schools, a national program in over 7,600 schools, which offers inclusive sports, youth leadership, and whole school engagement activities. ESPN is the Global Presenting Sponsor for Unified Sports. Special Olympics PA partners with the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) and is the governing body for Interscholastic Unified Sports. Currently, Unified Indoor Bocce is offered by high schools in the winter and Unified Track and Field in the spring.



## Interscholastic Unified Indoor Bocce Key Program Information

- The Unified Indoor Bocce team is regarded the same as all other interscholastic sports teams at the high school. For example, Unified Sports student athletes are eligible to earn varsity letters, matches are held in the main gym and conducted like a high school basketball game, and the team is included in all pep rallies and post-season awards ceremonies.
- **Required Roster Size:** Minimum of six and maximum of eight players on a roster who commit to attending all practices and competitions for the full season just like other interscholastic sports teams. If there is sufficient interest, a school can have a maximum of two teams, provided each one meets the proportionality requirements. No substitutes or alternates are allowed.
- **Eligibility:** This is an after school co-ed program open to boys and girls who must be in the 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades. Students receiving services from the school district up until the age of 21 also are eligible. Winter season interscholastic athletes are not eligible to be members of the Interscholastic Unified Indoor Bocce team.

- **Proportionality Requirement:** A Unified Indoor Bocce team must have a minimum of three Special Olympics-eligible athletes (defined as having an intellectual disability, developmental disability/some types of autism or cognitive delay) **and** a minimum of three students without a disability. If there are eight members on a team, the ideal composition is four Special Olympics athletes and four students without an intellectual disability, but you are allowed to have 5-3 or 3-5.
- **Unified Sports Principles:** One of the fundamental principles of Unified Sports to promote inclusion is meaningful involvement. To ensure all team members are empowered to contribute, everyone trains and competes as equal peers. This is not a mentorship program, but rather one where equality is emphasized and labels (i.e. special education student) removed.
- **Paperwork Requirement:** All students who are members of the Unified Indoor Bocce team are required to complete the PIAA – Special Olympics PA packet which includes the physical examination and parental consent forms. This will be provided by Special Olympics PA.
- The season begins with the team having its first practices during the **week of November 30**. Practices and competitions run through **March 3**. If needed, we have virtual options developed.
- There is a requirement for **two after-school practices each week** (most schools use the cafeteria) **with at least three regular season competitions**. A school hosts one match which needs to be conducted in the main gym. There will be a culminating conference or regional championship, with the winning team advancing to the Interscholastic Unified Indoor Bocce State Championships conducted as part of the PIAA State Basketball Championships in Hershey.