



**Special  
Olympics**  
New Mexico



**Date:** March 23, 2020

**To:** NMLETR Regional and Agency Coordinators

**From:** Ben Sanchez, LETR State Director and Oscar Solis, LETR Operations Director

**Subject:** SONM cancels practices, competitions, and mass gathering fundraising events through May 31, 2020; LETR cancels State Relay Run but encourages online and local business fundraising campaigns

Greetings LETR officers,

We hope this letter finds you well. Amidst the challenging times we are going through, Special Olympics New Mexico and our Law Enforcement Torch Run program remains resilient and hopeful for better times to come. Our Special Olympics athletes and their families are our top priority and we are doing all that we can to ensure their health and wellness is being preserved during this outbreak.

#### **How It Impacts Our Cancelled Special Olympics State Summer Games and LETR State Relay Run**

Recently, Special Olympics New Mexico announced that “after careful consideration, we have made additional decisions regarding the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on our organization and community.” In abiding to guidelines from the CDC, the State of New Mexico, and Special Olympics, Inc. (SOI), Special Olympics New Mexico will adhere to the following guidelines through May 31:

- **Cancellation of all sports training (practices).**
- **Cancellation of all competitions including area qualifying competitions and State Summer Games.**

#### **How It Impacts Our Athletes**

Unfortunately, for many of our athletes Special Olympics is either their main source or only source of health, fitness, as well as social and emotional wellness. Because of our sports training and competition program, they not only benefit from the joy of sport, but from the spirit of competition, and gain dignity from their own personal achievements. Because of our health and education initiatives, they receive medical screening and services that for them are harder to come by, and a level of peer-to-peer, youth connection and inclusion that is unmatched in other educational settings.

#### **How Your LETR Agency And/Or Local Businesses Can Help**

However, because of Torch Run we can continue to ensure that sport training, competition, along with health and educational initiatives will remain intact for all athletes and their families when times are tough and all other areas are uncertain. As we navigate through the health and community guidelines set by our health organizations, our local governments, and Special Olympics to combat the spread of the coronavirus, we ask that you first focus on keeping your health and safety a priority, and second remain hopeful in our fundraising efforts to ensure our Flame of Hope never loses its light for our athletes. While at this time NMLETR request the cancellation of all agency fundraising activities that involve mass gatherings of more than 10 people, we encourage you to consider hosting **Online Agency Fundraising Campaigns**, and partnering with local businesses deemed essential by the state of NM, and who can raise funds using our **Torch Icon Campaigns**. And if you see our athletes either online or out and about, please check in with them as social distancing to the rest can lead to social isolation to our athletes. We want to keep in constant contact with them as much as possible. We know that despite government mandates leading to temporary business closures and suspended events such as our own State Summer Games, that you as first responders join other frontline leaders in serving our communities. That is why we say thank you. Thank you for living the LETR Oath, when it concludes with: ***“I will protect, defend, and befriend all those who seek the joy of Special Olympics sport, and I will always be a Guardian of Flame Of Hope.”***