



## Equal Opportunities for High School Students with Disabilities

Under federal and state law, students with disabilities must be given an equal opportunity to participate in school extracurricular sports and activities. In June 2015, the Illinois Attorney General entered into a Settlement Agreement with the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) that provides new opportunities to Illinois high school students with disabilities.

**Q:** *I can't participate in a sport or activity under IHSA's rules because of my disability. What are my options?*

**A:** You can request an accommodation from IHSA. An accommodation is a change or modification to a rule that allows a person with a disability an equal opportunity to participate.

**Q:** *How do I get the accommodations that I need to participate in a sport or activity?*

**A:** Students are encouraged to work with their schools to make accommodations request to IHSA. As part of the settlement, IHSA has adopted a new Accommodations Policy and Accommodations Request Form that can be found on the IHSA website. Students should fill out and submit the Request Form to IHSA. Students with disabilities may need accommodations to IHSA's eligibility rules (found in IHSA's by-laws), the sport or activity's rules of play, or IHSA's terms and conditions. IHSA will review the request and response within 10 days.

**Q:** *What are the new opportunities for students with disabilities?*

**A:** In track and field, students who use wheelchairs can compete in various events at the State meet. In swimming and diving, students with disabilities can compete in various events at the State meet. In both sports, the new Combined Championship may be available, allowing schools competing in the Students with Disabilities Division to win a state championship. Beginning in the summer of 2016, IHSA will offer an annual road race open to all students, including students with disabilities. As was the case prior to the settlement, schools may hold events for students with disabilities that may include awards for successful competitions.

**Q:** *Who can I contact at IHSA for more information or help?*

**A:** IHSA now has an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator, who is responsible for reviewing requests for accommodations, assisting with IHSA's efforts to promote and publicize opportunities for students with disabilities and assisting schools in offering opportunities throughout the regular season. Students and schools can contact the ADA Coordinator for questions about accommodations. IHSA's ADA Coordinator is Kurt Gibson, and he can be reached at 309-663-6377 or [kgibson@ihsa.org](mailto:kgibson@ihsa.org).

The Attorney General's Disabilities Rights Bureau enforces state and federal laws that protect the rights of people with disabilities. For more information, visit the Disability Rights Bureau, online at <http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/rights/disabilityrights.html>, or contact our office.

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