

SITTING VOLLEYBALL

Guide for Schools



ABOUT MOVE UNITED

Why Inclusion

Move United uses sports to push what's possible so everyone has equal access to sports and recreation in their community. Established in 1956, Move United is an Affiliate of the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee.

Move United provides adaptive sports to individuals with disabilities as a means to (1) improve health, (2) increase access to employment and economic stability, (3) strengthen social support and (4) advance social norms and attitudes about people with disabilities. Each of the four items are social determinants of health, according to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Healthy People 2020.

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the U.S. Department of Education issued a Dear Colleague Letter in clarifying elementary, secondary, and postsecondary level schools' responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehab Act) to provide extracurricular athletic opportunities for students with disabilities. The guidance clarifies when and how schools should include students with disabilities in interscholastic athletic programs, defines what true equal treatment of student athletes with disabilities means, and urges schools to create adapted interscholastic athletic programs for students with disabilities. With nearly 1 in 4 Americans living with a disability, schools have the opportunity to change the disability narrative, creating access and opportunities for inclusion.

What Move United Offers

- Introductory sport guidelines and best practices for adapted sports.
- Facilitation of training for your coaches and officials with adaptive sports experts. Access to hundreds of community based adaptive sports organizations, resources and tools for specific sports.
- Decades of experience in disability sport training, sport adaptations and adaptive equipment.

Sports Are Important for Students with Disabilities

Benefits for students with disabilities who participate in sports are similar to students without disabilities:

- Supports daily living activities and independence
- Reduces risk of health-related diseases (i.e. cancer, heart disease and diabetes).
- Improves mental health, reduces depression and anxiety.
- More likely to have better grades, school attendance and lower dropout rate.
- Builds camaraderie with peers, less likely to be bullied.
- Build discipline, self-esteem, confidence, and independence.
- Learn team work, skill development and goal setting.
- Can offer opportunities for successes in college, career and community.

Due to the resources available, it is possible to add adapted sports within school athletic programs without creating an undue administrative burden for State High School Associations or requiring the association to change existing rules for the athletes without disabilities.

Thank you to



for generously supporting this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 4 **Overview**
An overview of the sport and it's rules.
- 6 **Equipment & Training**
The use of specialized and already existing equipment and teaching progressions for all.
- 8 **Competition & Rules**
Rule modifications for sitting volleyball and how to introduce the sport in a school setting.
- 10 **Including Athletes with Disabilities**
Guidelines for including athletes with disabilities on indoor teams.
- 12 **Safety**
Coaches tips and a safety toolkit are highlighted in this section
- 13 **FAQ's**
Frequently asked questions.
- 14 **Resources**
Resources for more information about sitting volleyball.



The content in this document is intended to provide guidelines and recommendations. Move United does not carry the authority to replace existing school or sport governing rules and regulations.

Contributors

- Kendra Hall, PLY-USA Sitting Volleyball Team
- Heather Erickson, PLY-USA Sitting Volleyball Team
- Kari Miller-Ortiz, PLY-USA Sitting Volleyball
- Nicky Nieves, PLY-USA Sitting Volleyball Team
- USA Volleyball

Photo Credits

- Tim Brown
- Cayla Hammaker
- Reed Hoffmann
- Angel City Sports

OVERVIEW

Sitting volleyball is an inclusive game that allows athletes with and without disabilities to play together on the same court. The sport levels the playing field by lowering the net and requiring all players to stay seated, making it highly accessible and adaptable for a wide range of abilities and experience levels.

The sport of sitting volleyball allows a diverse group of athletes to play. For the purpose of development, the teams can be mixed gender until there are enough athletes to have female and male teams.



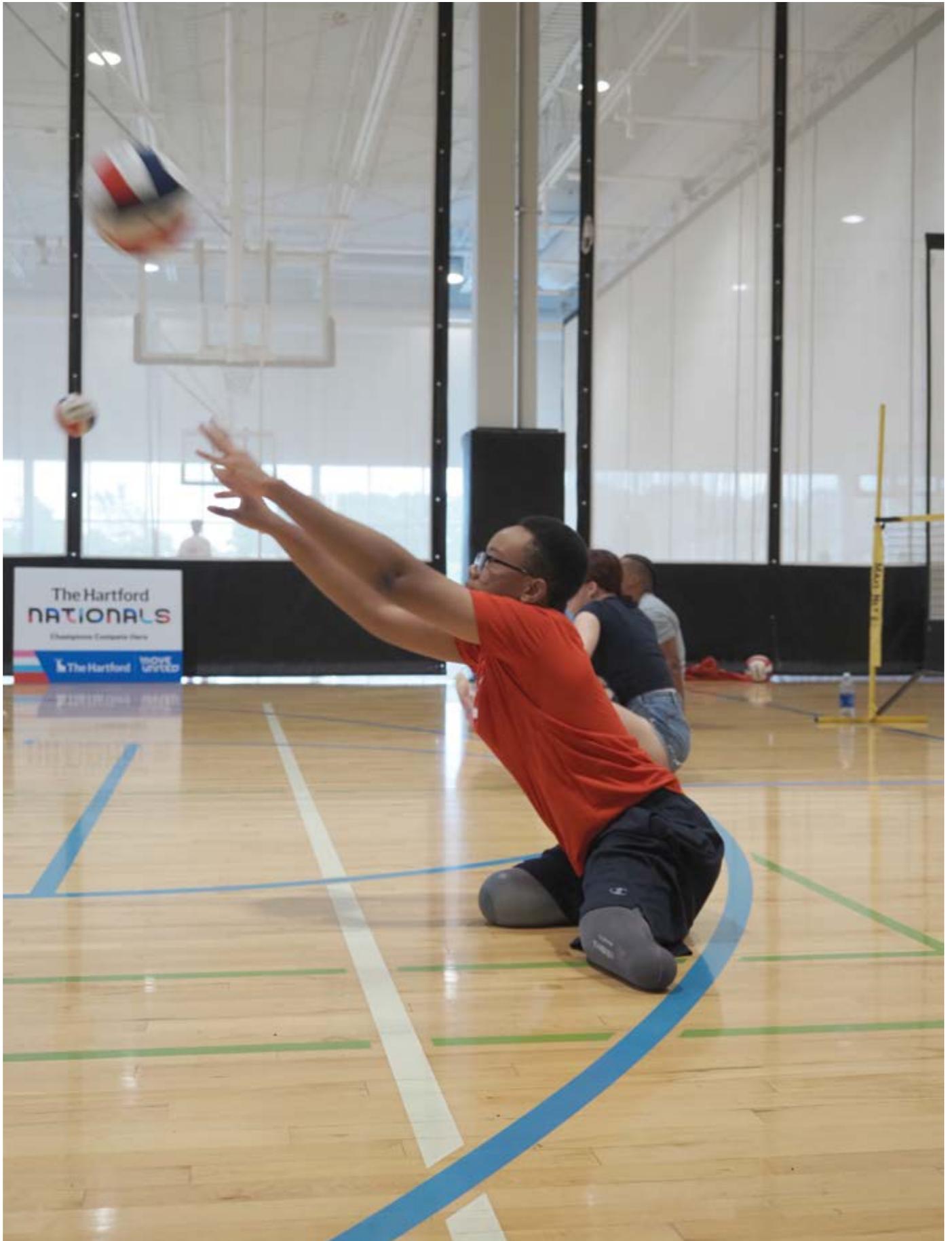
Standing Volleyball

vs.

Sitting Volleyball

9m x 18m (3m attack zone)	Court	10m x 6m (2m attack zone)
2.43m (men) 2.24m (women)	Net	1.15m (men) 1.05m (women) 1.10m (mixed)
Service may not be blocked or attacked	Service	Service can be blocked and attacked
Speed is dependent on level of experience and competition	Speed	Quicker speed due to reduced court size
Players may run and jump to play the ball	Movement	Players must maintain contact with the floor while playing the ball. They can slide and rise off the ground to pursue the ball but cannot stand or take steps. A short loss of contact with the court is permitted when making an extreme defensive play.





EQUIPMENT & TRAINING

Sitting Volleyball Equipment

- Telescoping volleyball poles
- Competition regulated volleyball netting
- Padding, standards, antennas
- Balls
- Court marking (use approved floor tape to outline a court using the sitting volleyball's smaller sized court dimensions)

Work with what you have

- Modify existing indoor net by fixing it to standing posts at the correct height or using it upside down.
- Inexpensive, adjustable pickleball and badminton nets are widely available. Or use two chairs with a net tied between.
- Padding, poles, antennas (use basic equipment from school's existing program)
- Balls (from existing indoor program). Beach balls or balloons are a great alternative.
- Court marking (use approved floor tape to outline a court using the sitting volleyball's smaller sized court dimensions)
- If starting with a small group of athletes begin with skill development and drills in pairs with and without a net.



Training for Coaches

Training for coaches is available through USA Volleyball and local adaptive sport programs that offer instruction in sitting volleyball. These trainings cover key topics such as safety, best practices, risk management, communication, competition structure, skill development and sport rules.

Inclusive Coaching Considerations

Training and skill development relies on the coach's ability to assess players accurately and manage the group safely according to individual ability levels. This is no different for athletes with or without disabilities.

Adaptability is important! Understanding the functional ability athletes have in their limbs will generate success. How does each skill work best for each athlete dependent on their ability, in a one size doesn't fit all sense.

When coaching athletes with disabilities, it's essential to help athletes understand and monitor their own bodies. Coaches should routinely check for signs of dehydration (including urine color), skin or pressure sores, and over-heating.

Skill Progression for Sitting Volleyball

The fundamentals and skills are the same, or very similar for indoor volleyball and sitting volleyball. Suggestions for skill progressions:

1. Foundational Movement and Positioning

- Seated posture options: hips, legs, and buttocks on the floor, maintaining balance and stability.
- Court mobility by sliding, pushing, and pulling with the arms and legs to move side to side and back and forth.
- Core strength and flexibility to support balance and quick reactions.

2. Ball Control and Contact Basics

- **Underhand passing (forearm pass):**
 - Platform angle, steady contact, and control from a seated position.
 - Torso rotation and core engagement to generate power.
- **Setting:**
 - Hand placement, follow-through, and quick release from the seated position.
- **Serving:**
 - Begin with an underhand/side arm serve, emphasizing control and accuracy.
 - Progress to overhand serves or modified tosses as strength and coordination improve.

3. Offensive Development

- **Attacking (hitting/spiking):**
 - Arm-swing mechanics adapted to the seated posture.
- **Offensive positioning:**
 - Spacing, readiness, and timing for quick transitions from pass to set to attack.

4. Defensive Techniques

- **Blocking:**
 - Timing, hand position, and safe contact above the net from a seated position.
- **Digging and floor defense:**
 - Controlled movement to reach low or wide balls.
 - Reinforce use of both arms and body rotation for safe, efficient digs.

5. Game Strategy and Team Systems

- Rotations and positions on the sitting volleyball court.
- Offensive and defensive systems, emphasizing teamwork, communication, and decision-making.
- Reinforce rule knowledge, including maintaining court contact during play.



COMPETITION & RULES

Key Rule Modifications for Sitting Volleyball

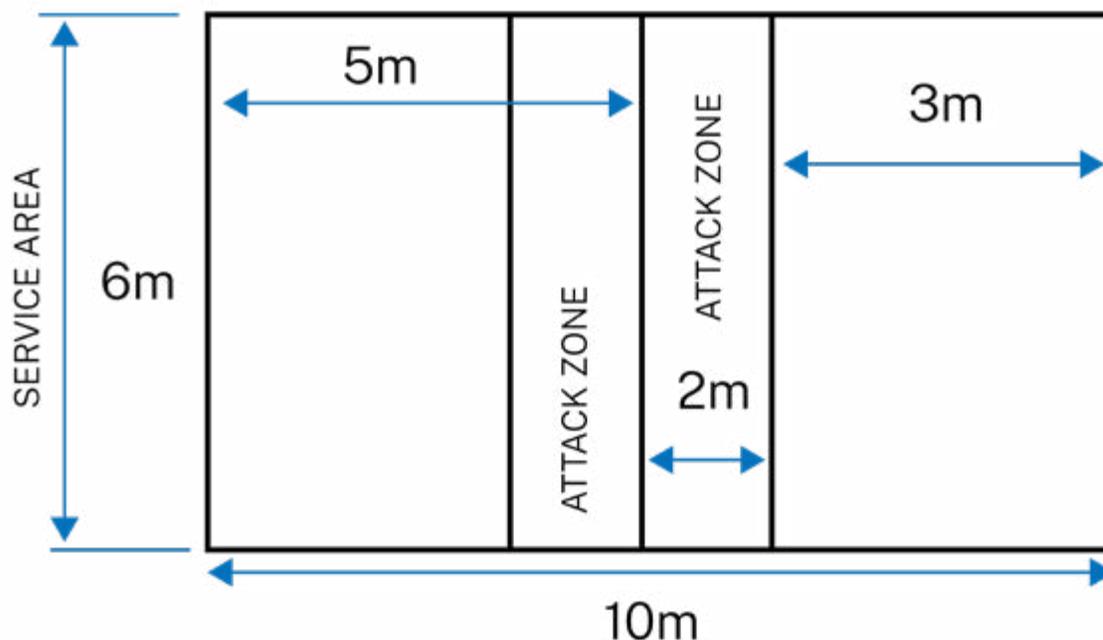
A player's position on the court is determined by the point of contact of the player's buttocks with the floor. Therefore, a player's lower limbs may cross the service, attack, and center lines, provided they do not interfere with the opponents

- Contact with the net is not permitted along the top band of the net between and including the antennae when the player is in the act of playing the ball. Players may contact the net below the top band of the net provided it does not interfere with play.
- Players must maintain contact with the floor while playing the ball. They can slide and rise off the ground to pursue the ball but cannot stand or take steps. A short loss of contact with the court is permitted when making an extreme defensive play.
- Blocking and/or attacking the opponent's serve is permitted.

Scoring

- A match may be the best of 3 or 5 sets, and uses rally scoring (every rally is worth a point regardless of who served and no replay of the rally is issued).
- In sets 1-2 in a best of 3 series, and sets 1-4 in a best of 5 series, a team wins the set by being the first to score 25 points and having a 2 point advantage. If a team does not have a 2 point advantage, play continues until such an advantage is earned.
- If a deciding 3rd or 5th set is needed, it is played until one team earns 15 points and has a 2 point advantage. Play continues beyond 15 points if needed for a team to earn the 2 point advantage.

Court Dimensions



General Rules for Both Sitting & Indoor Formats

- Sitting volleyball follows the same game strategy of indoor volleyball. Play is initiated by a serve and continues until the ball contacts the floor or a team commits a fault.
- When a team wins possession of the serve from the opponent, the team will rotate clockwise one position.
- Each team has three contacts in which to play the ball, including directing the ball onto the opponent's court. A block touch does not count as one of the team's three contacts.
- Each team has six players in their lineup, one of whom may be a Libero (a defensive specialist position who may only play in the back row). If a team wishes to use a Libero, this player must wear a uniform top that is contrasting in color from the rest of the players in the lineup.
- Players who are positioned in the back row at the start of a rally may only attack a ball that is completely above the height of the net when their buttocks is completely behind the attack line. Back row players whose buttocks is in contact with or is in front of the attack line may only attack the ball when it is partially or completely below the height of the net.

How to Introduce Sitting Volleyball

- Start a club or intramural team where athletes with and without disabilities play alongside each other. Adapted sport is for everyone. It is another avenue to enjoy sport. Adapted doesn't mean easier, just different.
- Incorporate sitting volleyball into existing indoor volleyball programming.
 - Athletes with injuries can maintain their skills through sitting volleyball while rehabilitating lower leg injuries.
 - Substitute sitting volleyball for traditional indoor volleyball in PE curriculum.
- Ask your current indoor volleyball team members to serve as sitting volleyball practice players and to referee matches.
- Find out if current high school coaches would be interested in coaching a sitting volleyball team.
- For additional players or coaches, contact local college students who are studying physical education or adaptive sports at school.
- Ask local junior volleyball club players to volunteer to referee matches in exchange for community service hours (in many regions these players receive training as part of their junior volleyball club experience).
- Tournament play: Based on geography and other teams in the area. Consider holding regional meets on the weekend so that programs can travel to one central location. Invite other teams that are part of adaptive sport organizations or universities to join.



INCLUDING ATHLETES WITH DISABILITIES

Athletes with disabilities can be successfully and easily included on both Varsity and Junior Varsity indoor volleyball teams. This may include athletes with upper or lower limb impairments or those with a mobility disability.



Tips from Paralympic Sitting Volleyball athletes who played on their high school indoor teams:

- **Focus on strengths and individual needs:**
Spend time learning about each athlete's abilities and strengths as no two people experience disability in the same way. Be aware of any specific needs related to their disability (e.g., use of prosthetics or medication).
 - Ask how you can best support them. Do they want extra time to work on a particular skill?
 - Learn their goals, just as you would for any athlete. Are they aiming to make varsity, or are they focused on gaining team experience and connection?
- **Adapt skills through patience and creativity:**
If a movement or skill is difficult, don't assume the athlete can't perform it. In many cases, they simply need extra time, support, and space to discover what works best for them. This process often involves trial and error. Seek out other athletes, either locally or online, who have similar experiences, as they can offer valuable ideas and insights.
- **Foster team understanding without singling anyone out:**
Depending on the athlete's comfort level, it can be helpful for teammates to understand the barriers or adjustments an athlete with a disability may face, especially if drills are performed differently. However, be careful not to "other" or unintentionally separate the athlete from their peers.
- **Advocate with respect and inclusion.**
Most importantly, advocate for your athletes with disabilities within their comfort zone. Address prejudice or ignorance when it arises and encourage the entire team to be allies and advocates for inclusion.



SAFETY

Student athletes with disabilities do not represent a higher level of liability risk or risk management concern than student athletes without disabilities. With proper planning and contingencies, student athletes with disabilities can seamlessly integrate into the dynamics of an interscholastic team. Individualized assessments can help assess or identify any potential safety concerns.

Safety Resources

Ensuring athlete safety is a priority. Through education, resources, and training, members of the sport community can recognize, reduce, and respond to misconduct in sport. Please refer to the following resources for more information.

What is SafeSport?

<https://uscenterforsafesport.org>



FAQ'S

Frequently Asked Questions

Can you play in a wheelchair?

If you have athletes that are not able to transfer to sit on the ground they can stay in their wheelchair. Communicate safety concerns to all athletes as it relates to the wheelchair itself. Using a balloon or beach ball at first gives all athletes more time to react to the ball and allows slower movements. If an athlete in a wheelchair can transfer to the floor they can use their wheelchair cushion or a back support as needed.

Are there any safety considerations?

Some tips:

- Group athletes by ability level if possible.
- Kneepads can be worn over stump for extra protection as well as knee pads on knees to assist with the scooting that happens on the court.
- For younger athletes use softer volleyballs (volley-lite) or other soft touch balls.
- Start young athletes with balloons and beach balls.

What should I wear to play?

Compression shorts, socks, yoga pants, t-shirts, sleeve for stump if desired. Tennis/volleyball shoes, wrestling shoes or other indoor court shoes; knee pads.

Can I play with my prosthetic limb?

It depends, if wearing a prosthetic arm, the answer is yes. You can use it to pass, serve, and block. A prosthetic leg is very hard and has immovable parts. If an athlete or teammate falls on it, it could cause injury to them or damage the prosthetic, so it may be best to play without it.

What if I have never coached or played volleyball before?

Your primary role is to be a strong leader and to help strengthen and develop character; technical and tactical knowledge comes with time. Take advantage of on court learning opportunities.

What if I've coached indoor but never sitting volleyball?

The rule differences are very minimal, and the fundamentals of the skills are the same or very similar. If you coach indoor volleyball, you will have no trouble at all coaching sitting volleyball. Figure out what abilities the athletes have and build off of those. Collaborate with athletes to find a way to execute the skills based on what their bodies will allow.

Should I still offer a sitting volleyball program if no athletes are interested?

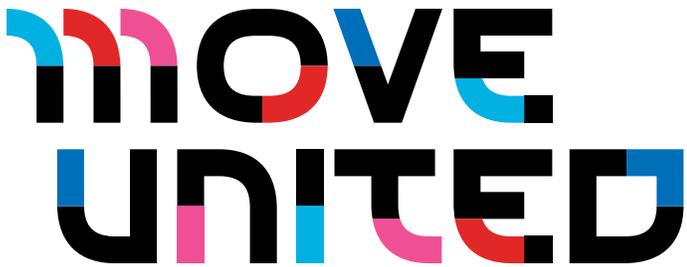
Yes! Your school could provide a much needed competition for other schools that do have adaptive athletes on their sitting volleyball team. You are also helping to spread the word about adaptive sports and raise awareness. Last, remember, anyone can play sitting volleyball. Add it as a club or intramural sports for athletes with and without disabilities to play together.

RESOURCES

USA Volleyball	https://usavolleyball.org/play/about-sitting-volleyball/
American Volleyball Coaches Association	http://www.avca.org
Adaptive Sport Organizations	https://moveunitedsport.org/locations/
VolleySLIDE	https://worldparavolley.org/volley-slide/
Local Adapted Sport Organizations	https://moveunitedsport.org/locations/







MISSION

Move United uses the power of sport to push what's possible for people with disabilities, confronting ignorance, fueling conversation, and inciting action that leads us to a world where everyone's included.

VISION

Move United's vision is that every person, regardless of ability, has an equal opportunity to participate in sports and recreation in their community. Our mission is to provide national leadership and opportunities for individuals with disabilities to develop independence, confidence, and fitness through participation in community sports, including competition, recreation and educational programs.

Local Contact

Local adaptive sport organization
may input contact info here.

**For more information,
visit moveunitedsport.org**