



2025-2026

CCDHH Contest

2025-2026 District Chair Planning Guide

Topic:

“The Moment I Realized I Belonged —My Definition of Community”

Purpose

This contest is designed to offer young people who are deaf or hard of hearing the opportunity to present their thoughts in a public forum. This experience helps contestants develop the skills and confidence to present in sign or orally to a large audience. The program also provides a valuable opportunity to compete for a \$2,500 college scholarship.

How to Enter

Contestants make a 4-5 minute presentation on a assigned topic. The presentations are judged at the Club level, Zone level (if needed) and the District level. Some Districts, due to participation levels, conduct a single District contest without Club level contests preceding the event. All Club submissions should be run through a plagiarism checker before being forwarded to the next level.

Eligibility

The contest is open to contestants through grade 12 in the United States and Canada, to CEGEP in Quebec and the equivalent in the Caribbean and the rest of the world. Contestants must submit the results of an audiogram (or Cochlear Implant Programming Report) completed no longer than 24 months prior to the date of the contest by a qualified audiologist. Contestants must be certified to have uncorrected hearing loss of 40 decibels or more, which must be supported by the audiogram (or CI Programming Report) in order to be eligible to compete. Contestants attending either public school or schools providing special services are eligible to enter if criteria are met.

Presentation Style

Contestants may use sign language, an oral presentation or a combination of both to compete. Both styles are judged using the same criteria.

Minimum Number of Participants

Zone and District contests must have no fewer than 3 contestants. In cases where the minimum number of 3 contestants at the Zone contest cannot be met, there are two options:

A. Send Club winners directly to the next level of the contest.

B. Combine Zone level contests.

There are no exceptions for District contests.

Contest Deadlines

Club contest date is set by the Club Chair, once the District date has been obtained.

The District contest date is set by the District CCDHH Chair. **The deadline to submit District materials to Optimist International is June 15, 2026.**

The District winners will be notified by a letter from Optimist International between June 15th and July 31st. Districts should notify the Programs department by May 15th if they would like the winner notification to be delayed.

Prizes

Scholarships are awarded to contestants in the United States and the Caribbean in US dollars and in Canadian dollars for Canadian contestants.

Club level - medallion

Clubs are allowed to give monetary/cash* awards of up to \$500 per winner for the CCDHH contest in addition to the official medallions. The Club level awards may be given in the form of a scholarship, savings bond or cash prize but are completely discretionary. Please contact the Optimist International Foundation or Canadian Children's Optimist Foundation for setting up a Club scholarship.

*Disclaimer - Clubs planning to present cash or savings bond awards to contestant winners should first consult the association for their state or province that coordinates scholastic activities and competitions to determine if such payments would result in the recipient's forfeiture of amateur status. If a contestant loses their amateur status, they may be unable to compete in collegiate athletics and activities.

District level - plaque and a \$2,500 scholarship

Districts choosing to increase funding for the scholarship or fund additional scholarships will need to manage those funds through other resources. Optimist International will not handle the awarding of any scholarships not funded by the Optimist International Foundations. The responsibility for record-keeping and awarding of additional funds or scholarships will be the Districts.

Districts may choose to hold the additional funds in District accounts or set up a Club Campaign through the Optimist International Foundations. Gifts for increased or additional scholarships will not be counted for District or Club recognition.

The Foundations will process requests from the Districts to have scholarship funds returned to them. Requests must be in writing and specify the type of scholarship and the amount. The



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Foundations will not award the scholarships or write checks to the individual scholarship recipients or their schools.

Getting the Contest Started in Your Community

The first thing your Club Chair should do is contact the District CCDHH Chair and make sure the District will be sponsoring the program. Not all Districts conduct this program, so it is important to verify that a District level contest is available to contestants in your community.

Once District participation has been confirmed, contact schools providing education for deaf and hard of hearing contestants. Some contestants will be mainstreamed, attending school with hearing contestants, while some may be educated at schools that provide special services. The local Board of Education should be contacted to find out how your community's school system works regarding this issue.

Give each school an overview of the program, a copy of the rules and Club contact information. If the school is responsive, send them contest applications. Provide the date and location of the Club's contest and keep in touch on a regular basis.

Criteria and Duties for Judges

Three judges who are not acquainted with the presenters are required. Judges must be able to evaluate the presentation style of contestants with and without the assistance of an interpreter. If all contestants are using sign language then deaf judges are allowed. Judges should have expertise working with young people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

At the Club level, judges may be Optimist Members. At all other levels of the competition, judges must be non-Optimists (Friends of Optimists are excluded and can be used as judges).

Judges are also potential new Members, so don't forget to recruit them.

The Club Chair supplies each judge with a judging form and copy of the rules. Judges should not compare scores or their impressions of the presentations. They must work independently. Only the Club Chair compiling the totals is permitted to see scores. Scores are confidential.

Interpreters

A certified interpreter is provided by the sponsoring Club/District at all competitions. They must be certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc., or a similarly recognized organization. Interpreters must be able to convey the information of the contestant to the judges. A contestant should never be required to provide his or her own interpreter.

Timekeeper

This position can be held by an Optimist Member. There are no specific requirements for this position. Their duties include recording the time of the presentation and failure to announce the topic. The timekeeper totals all participants' deductions and turns the form in to the Contest Chair. Timing will begin at the first word or sign.

After the District Contest

The District Chair should submit:

- _____ Winner's Information Form
- _____ Official Zone/District Entry Form
- _____ Contestant's Application Form
- _____ Copy of Passport, Birth Certificate, or ID
- _____ Audiogram or Cochlear Implant Programming Report (conducted within 24 months of the contest date)
- _____ Typed presentation

To the Optimist International Programs Department by June 15, 2026:

**Optimist International Programs
Department • Attn: Oratorical Coordinator
4494 Lindell Blvd. • St. Louis, MO 63108
or fax to: 1-314-371-6006**

Please Note: Scholarships will not be processed until all paperwork has been completed in its entirety and received by Optimist International.

Official Rules

Section I- Contest Organization

1. The CCDHH District Chair is responsible for all phases of the contest and their rulings in accordance with the official rules are final.
2. All competitions must be conducted by Optimists only.
3. The contest date, time and place will be determined by the Contest Chair.
4. All contestants must comply with the official rules of the contest.
5. **All Zone and District-level contests must have a minimum of 3 contestants participating.**

Section II - General Rules

1. Contestants must enter through a local Optimist Club.
2. Contestants are only eligible for one Club's contest during any given year.
3. Each contestant must prepare his or her own presentation with limited assistance on content. Improvements to the presentation can be made at any time.
4. The official application must be completed by each contestant and submitted to the sponsoring Club's Contest Chair.
5. There is no stated minimum number of contestants that have to be obtained to perform a legitimate Club-level competition. In cases where the minimum number of 3 contestants at the Zone contest cannot be met, there are two options:
 - A. Send Club winners directly to the next level of the contest.
 - B. Combine Zone level contests.
6. All Zone and District level contests must have no fewer than 3 contestants participating. There are no exceptions for District contests.
7. A contestant who has won an Optimist International CCDHH or CCHI scholarship of any kind is not eligible to compete at any level of the competition again.

Section III – Qualifications for Contestants

1. **The contest is open to contestants through grade 12 in the United States and Canada, to CEGEP in Quebec and the equivalent in the Caribbean and the rest of the world.**

Contestants must submit the results of an audiogram (or if the contestant has a Cochlear Implant, then a Programming Report is required in lieu of the audiogram) completed no longer than 24 months prior to the date of the contest by a qualified audiologist. Contestants must be certified to have a hearing loss of 40 decibels or more, which must be supported by the audiogram (or CI Programming Report) in order to be eligible to compete.

2. Contestants attending public school or schools providing special services are eligible to compete if eligibility criteria are met.

Section IV - Contest Rules

1. The interpreter is to be provided by the sponsoring Optimist Club/Zone or District.
2. The Contest Chair, prior to the start of the contest will conduct a drawing for the presentation order. All contestants will then be referred to as Presenter A, Presenter B, etc.
3. All contestants must make a presentation on the official contest topic.
4. Contestants can present in sign language, orally or using a combination of both.
5. Presentations may not be delivered in a language other than English or French.
6. All contestants must give the official contest topic in the first sentence of their presentation. If a contestant fails to do this, a 3-point penalty will be automatically assessed by the timekeeper.
7. Any quotation, copyrighted, or largely paraphrased material used in the presentation must be identified with the original author's name. Failure to identify non-original material will result in up to 10 penalty points.
8. The use of props, special costumes or clothing will result in 10 penalty points.
9. Notes and lecterns can be used if the contestant desires.
10. The time limit is not under 4 minutes and no longer than 5 minutes. Contestants going over or under will not be cautioned, and will be penalized one point for each 15 seconds or fraction of over or under the time limits. This penalty will be assessed by the timekeeper.
11. Timing will begin at the first word or sign. Timing will stop when the contestant finishes.
12. No reference can be made that identifies the contestant, parents, school, community, sponsoring Optimist Club or District. This will result in a deduction of up to 5 points.

13. Contestants must not be identified by name, school or sponsoring Club until all judges have started deliberations.
14. Any protest in the conduct at any level of this must be made immediately after the condition is noted. Protests received after the next contestant has been introduced, or in the case of the last contestant, after the judges leave to total the scores, will not be accepted under any circumstances.
15. The Contest Chair will rule on all protests in accordance with the official rules. The decision of the District Chair is final and no higher appeals will be recognized.

Section V - Judging and Timing

1. Each contest must have three judges, one timekeeper and one certified interpreter. At the Club level, judges may be Optimist Members. At all other levels of the contest, judges must be non-Optimists (Friends of Optimists are excluded and can be used as judges).
2. The judges must be qualified to evaluate the presentation methods of contestants with or without the assistance of an interpreter. If all contestants are using sign language, then deaf judges are allowed.
3. The judges and timekeeper must not be identified in any pre-publicity or at the contest until after the contest has been completed.
4. During the contest, the judges and the timekeeper should be seated in different locations.
5. The timekeeper must be provided with a regulation stopwatch or equivalent timing device.
6. Judges are not permitted to discuss or compare scores or opinions on any of the contestants with anyone or each other. Judges must evaluate each presentation independently.
7. The judges' scores and penalties are confidential and should not be viewed by anyone except the Contest Chair.

Section VI – Scoring

1. Material Organization – subject adherence, theme, content, color and logic. The maximum point award is 40 points.
2. Delivery & Presentation – delivery, gestures and emphasis. The maximum point award is 30 points.
3. Overall Effectiveness – appeal, impression, attitude and effect. The maximum point award is 30 points.

Section VII – Penalties

1. Failure to give official topic – 3 point penalty
2. Failure to identify non-original material – up to 10 points
3. Use of props, etc. —10 points
4. Time penalties – 1 points for each 15 seconds or fraction of over or under the limit
5. Self-identification – up to 5 points
6. Failure to complete speech – disqualification
7. Use of audience prompters - disqualification

Section VIII – Awards

The following are the only awards to be given in the Optimist International Communication Contest for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at all Club and District contests. These official Optimist International awards are available from Shumsky Optimist Supply or Ansell's Awards will not be ordered or sent automatically.

1. Club Awards: Medallion
Clubs are allowed to give monetary awards of up to \$500 per winner in addition to the official medallions. The Club level awards may be given in the form of a scholarship, savings bond or cash prize but are completely discretionary.
2. District Awards: Plaque and Scholarship
 - A. One winner from each participating District will receive a \$2500 scholarship for use at a college, university or trade school only.
 - B. Scholarships are paid through the Optimist International Foundation in the United States and Caribbean and the Canadian Children's Optimist Foundation in Canada.
 - C. All scholarships will be administered by Optimist International.
 - D. All scholarships will be payable to the educational institution of the recipient's choice, subject to the approval of Optimist International.
 - E. Winners of an Optimist International scholarship must claim their scholarship by the age of 25.
 - F. If a District chooses to raise the amount of a scholarship funded by either of the Optimist International Foundations or fund additional scholarships, the District will be responsible for the management and awarding of those funds.

Visitor Sign-In Sheet

Name: _____ Home phone: _____

Businessphone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Country: _____ Zip Code: _____

Notes: _____

Name: _____ Home phone: _____

Businessphone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Country: _____ Zip Code: _____

Notes: _____

Name: _____ Home phone: _____

Businessphone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Country: _____ Zip Code: _____

Notes: _____

Name: _____ Home phone: _____

Businessphone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Country: _____ Zip Code: _____

Notes: _____



Zone/District Worksheet

☐ Combined ☐ Oral
☐ Signing

For all Zone and District contests

District Name _____ Zone Number _____

City _____ Contest Site _____

Date ____/____/____ Time _____

Presentation Order	Contestant's Name	Zone/District Entry Form	Audiogram	Place in Contest



Official Judge's Score Sheet

☐ Combined ☐ Oral
☐ Signing

For all Zone and District contests

Material Organization	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
<i>Subject Adherence</i> — Stayed on topic throughout presentation. 0-10 points										
<i>Theme</i> — Title and content followed this year's theme. 0-5 points										
<i>Logic</i> — Presentation follows a particular sequence of facts and events. 0-10 points										
<i>Content</i> — Presentation has substance. 0-10 points										
<i>Color</i> — Audience has clear picture of what the presenter is expressing. 0-5 points										
Delivery and Presentation	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
<i>Delivery</i> — Clear, concise and dynamic presentation. 0-15 points										
<i>Gestures</i> — Control and use of body while speaking. 0-5 points										
<i>Emphasis</i> — Expressive, dynamic, impressive 0-10 points										
Overall Effectiveness	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
<i>Appeal</i> — Presenter made a point or aroused a response as a result of the entire presentation. 0-10 points										
<i>Impression</i> — The presentation made an impression in the minds of the audience. 0-10 points										
<i>Attitude</i> — Presenter supported a position that accomplished the purpose of the topic. 0-5 points										
<i>Effect</i> — Presenter accomplished a purpose in the minds of the audience members. 0-5 points										
Total Points										

Judge's Name _____ Date _____ / _____ / _____

Penalty Points

Contestant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Use of props, costumes, etc. - 10 points										
Self-identification up to 5 points										
Timekeeper penalty (1 point per each 15 seconds or portion over 1 point per 15 seconds or under the official time limit)										
Failure to announce the topic in the first sentence of the presentation. 3 points										
Failure to identify non-original material up to 10 points										
Failure to complete the presentation. Disqualification										
Use of audience prompts Disqualification										
Total Penalty Points										
Net Scores of Point Grades (no Ties)										
Contestant's Rank in Contest										

1. Material Organization

40 points

(Subject Adherence, Theme, Logic, Content, Color)

In this category, just the material and its organization as presented by the contestant should be judged. A judge should consider the importance of adherence to the subject of the speech, the proper introduction and the logic and coherent development of the theme which brings about a successful and adequate conclusion. Figures of speech, similes, metaphors, colorful choice of words and zestful, descriptive phrases are important qualities.

2. Delivery and Presentation

30 points

(Delivery, Gestures, Emphasis)

Delivery and presentation shall be judged on several factors. Delivery should be continuous without hesitation or halting. Gestures should be appraised for frequency, nature and effectiveness. Emphasis should be well placed and dynamic.

3. Overall Effectiveness

30 points

(Appeal, Impression, Attitude, Effect)

In this category the overall impression created by the speaker and the speech should be rated. While it must not be used as such, it is in making this particular score that a judge would most closely approach a conclusion that would actually rank the contestants in his or her own opinion.

Penalty Explanations

A. Use of props, costumes, etc.: The use of props or special costumes or clothing will result in a penalty of 10 points. The use of audience prompts will not be permitted and the penalty is disqualification. Notes and lecterns may be used if the speaker desires to do so.

B. Self-Identification: To eliminate any bias or prejudice, no presentation or part of a presentation may be used that identifies the contestant, their family, school, community, sponsoring Optimist Club or District. The maximum penalty is five points but is assigned by each judge based on the degree of self-identification.

C. Time Penalties: The time limit for presentations is no less than 4 minutes or over 5 minutes in length. Contestants going over or under the time limit will not be cautioned, but will be penalized one point for each 15 seconds or portion over or under the limits. These penalties will be determined by the timekeeper.

D. Failure to announce the official topic in the first sentence of the presentation: To assist the timekeeper in establishing a uniform starting time, all contestants must express the official topic of the presentation in the first sentence. A three-point penalty must be assessed by the timekeeper.

E. Failure to complete the presentation: Each contestant must complete the entire presentation. Penalty is disqualification.

Official Timekeeper's Score Sheet

☐ Combined ☐ Oral
☐ Signing

For all Zone and District contests

The official timekeeper shall use a regulation stopwatch or equivalent timing device, which will be supplied by the Contest Chair.

Time Penalties

The time limit for speeches will be not under 4 minutes or over 5 minutes in length. Contestants going over or under the time limit will not be cautioned, but will be penalized one point for each 15 seconds or fraction over or under the time limit. These penalties will be determined by the official timekeeper.

Timing will begin at the first word or sign. Any salutation to the judges, audience, etc., should precede the statement of the topic. Timing will stop when the contestant finishes the presentation.

All contestants must express the official topic in the first sentence of the presentation. If a contestant fails to do this, a three- point penalty is automatically assessed by the timekeeper.

Failure to identify non-original material verbally

Any non-original material in the speech must be noted in the printed copy of the speech. If a contestant fails to identify all non-original material, the result is disqualification. The penalty is assessed by the timekeeper.

Speakers in order of appearance	Time minutes/ sections	Over/Under time-point penalties	Failure to announce topic in the first sentence of the presentation	Total penalty points
A				
B				
C				
D				
E				
F				
G				
H				
I				
J				

Signature_____Date_____/_____/_____

Timekeeper's Name

Official Report Form

☐ Combined ☐ Oral
☐ Signing

For all Zone and District contests

Contestant's Speaking Order	First Judge		Second Judge		Third Judge		Total of Point Grades	Total of Rank	Place
	Point Grades	Rank	Point Grades	Rank	Point Grades	Rank			
A									
B									
C									
D									
E									
F									
G									
H									
I									
J									

The CCDHH Contest Chair should check the math for each contestant's score. Enter the final point grades and ranks on this report form. The Contest Chair should announce the results from this form. For preliminary contests, the Chair will name by letter the two or three best contestants without announcing first, second or third place. For final contests, the Chairperson will name by letter the third, second then first place winners.

To determine rank in Club, Zone and District contests, each judge ranks the speakers as 1,2,3, etc., according to their scores. Ties are not permitted.

At the end of the contest, the Chair collects the judges' score sheets and checks the math. The point grade and position of rank for each contestant is entered on the Official Report Form for each judge. The winning contestant is then determined as follows:

1. If any contestant is ranked first by a majority of the judges, he or she is automatically declared the winner. This method is not used to rank a contestant second or third.
2. All other contestants are ranked by the "total of rank" system. This means that the rank, not the points each judge has given each contestant, is added and this figure is placed in the Total of Rank column. First-place is determined by this means also, if no one qualifies under the method explained in #1 above. The lowest total wins first place, the next lowest second-place and so on.

3. If a two-way tie results for any place, it is broken by a preferential vote. Using the rankings given on the ballots, a tabulation is made on the number of judges who placed one of the tied contestants higher than the other. Example: Two contestants, speakers D and H, are tied for third place and each has received a rank of nine. Speaker H would be declared the third-place winner as two judges (#2 and 3) ranked H higher than speaker D, who would be ranked fourth in the contest.

Contestants' Rank of Order	Rank of Judge 1	Rank of Judge 2	Rank of Judge 3	Total of Rank
D	3	4	2	9
H	5	3	1	9

4. If a three-way tie results by the total of rank system, then and only then, are the point grades for each contestant totaled to break the three-way tie.

Caution: Scores and rankings should be checked by a second person to ensure accuracy, but remember this information is confidential. Announcing the winners incorrectly could be disastrous!

2025-2026 Official Zone/District Entry Form

☐ Combined ☐ Oral
☐ Signing

Be sure that your contestant is fully qualified to compete by filling in each line of this entry form. **Your Club should complete all of its requirements including the signatures.** Attach a printed copy of the presentation and a current audiogram (or Cochlear Implant Programming Report) and submit the materials to the Chair of the next level at least two weeks prior to the contest date.

Name (print) _____

Address _____

City: _____ State/Country: _____ Zip Code: _____

Date of birth _____ / _____ / _____ E-mail Address _____
month/day/year

Phone (_____) _____

To Club and District officers

“As a contestant, I received a copy of the official rules for the Optimist International Communication Contest for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing and fully understand them. I agree to be bound by all requirements. I have prepared my own presentation with limited assistance on the topic. I have given due credit by properly identifying all quotations and use of non-original material used in my presentation. I understand that any omission or violation of the rules on my part will mean immediate disqualification.”

Contestant's Signature _____ Date _____ / _____ / _____

Contest information to be completed by the appropriate level's Chair as the paperwork progresses with the winner.

Number of youth in **Club** contest _____

Number of youth in **Zone** contest _____

For Club and Zone Chairs' signatures

“We, the undersigned, in full compliance with the Optimist International Communication Contest for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing contest rules, enter this contestant in the Zone/District contest. We understand that included with this form, a current audiogram (or Cochlear Implant Programming Report) and a printed copy of the presentation must be submitted to the Contest Chair before this contestant competes in the next level of the contest.”

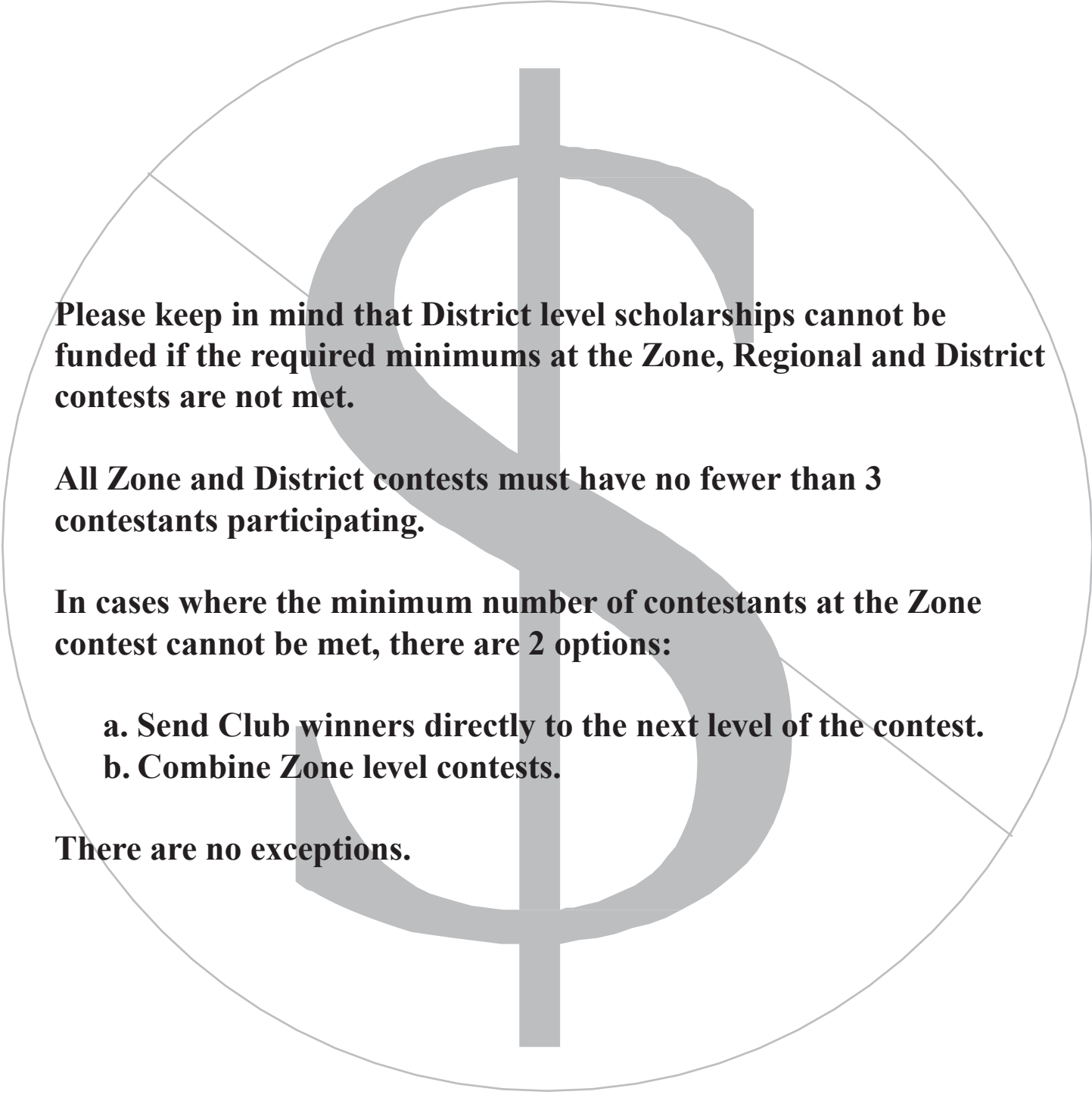
Optimist Club of _____ Club Number _____

District Name _____

Club President's Signature _____

Club Contest Chair's Signature _____

Zone Chair's Signature (to enter District level) _____



Please keep in mind that District level scholarships cannot be funded if the required minimums at the Zone, Regional and District contests are not met.

All Zone and District contests must have no fewer than 3 contestants participating.

In cases where the minimum number of contestants at the Zone contest cannot be met, there are 2 options:

- a. Send Club winners directly to the next level of the contest.**
- b. Combine Zone level contests.**

There are no exceptions.

2025-2026 District Winner's Information Form

Name (print) _____
Address _____
City: _____ State/Country: _____ Zip Code: _____
Date of birth _____/_____/_____
month/day/year
Phone (_____) _____
Sponsored by the _____ Optimist Club of _____
Club Number _____

Verification of Winner

*"We the undersigned, do verify that the contestant listed above won the District CCDHH contest and that all information requested on the form has been provided in full. We understand the paperwork must be submitted to the Optimist International Programs Department by **June 15.**"*

_____ **Number of Clubs Participating in District Contest**

_____ **Number of Contestants in District Contest**

District Name _____ District Number _____

District Governor's Signature _____

District CCDHH Chair's Signature _____

Phone (_____) _____ Email: _____

Submit this form (with all required signatures) along with the following:

_____ Official Zone/District Entry Form

_____ Audiogram (conducted within 24 months of the date of the contest)

_____ Copy of Passport, Birth Certificate, or ID

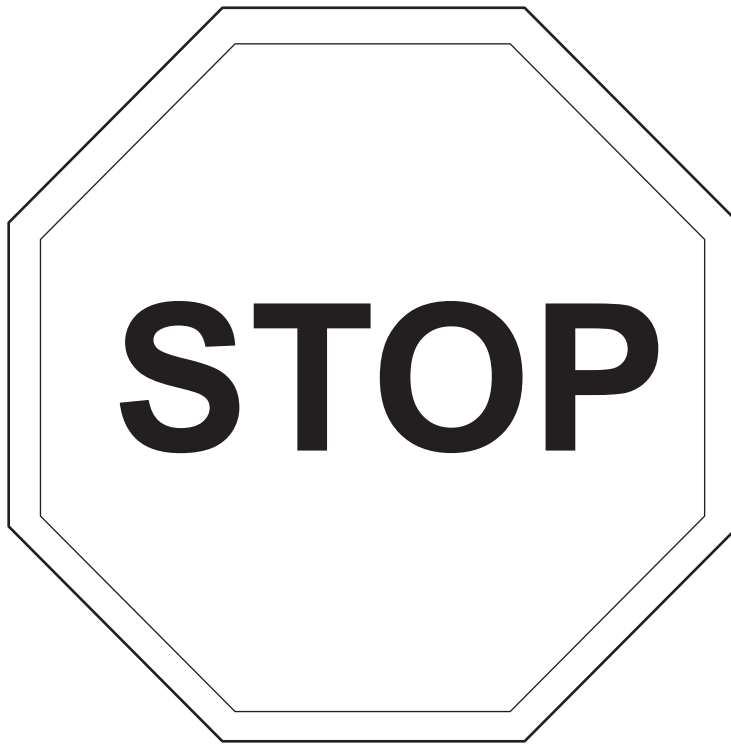
_____ Contestant's Application Form

_____ Printed copy of presentation

To:

Optimist International Programs Department

email to: programs@optimist.org



In order for the District scholarship to be processed, District Chairs must submit the following:

_____ Winner's Information Form

- Must have District Chair and District Governor's signatures
- **Must have number of contestants in District competition**

_____ Application for 2025-2026 Optimist International CCDHH Contest

_____ Zone/District Entry Form

- Must have appropriate signatures

_____ Copy of Passport, Birth Certificate, or ID

_____ Audiogram (or Cochlear Implant Programming Report)

- Must confirm contestant has a hearing loss of 40 decibels or more
- **Must have been conducted within 24 months prior to the date of the contest**

_____ Printed copy of presentation

To be received by Optimist International by June 15, 2026

2025-2026 CCDHH District Chair Evaluation Form

District Name _____

Chair Name (optional) _____

Are you a first-time or repeating Chair? _____ Contest year _____

What was your favorite part of the contest as Chair?

What was your least favorite part of the contest as Chair?

What was your opinion on this year's topic? Do you have any suggestions for future topics?

What recommendations, if any, would you propose for improving the CCDHH contest?

Please share any procedures that worked well for your Club.

Please list any changes your Club will make for next year's contest.

This form should be submitted to:

Optimist International Programs Department

email to: programs@optimist.org