

Local Program Development Guide

Section 3 – Volunteers, Coaches, and Families

In order to run efficiently, all Local Programs rely on several functions for success. Volunteers, coaches, and families all play a very important role in the health of your Local Program.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of Special Olympics. Your Local Program will thrive due to your ability to recruit and meaningfully involve volunteers. This process includes identifying your volunteer needs, locating and recruiting volunteers in your service area, proper registration and training for volunteers, and acknowledging their contributions.

Your Accredited Program has staff responsible for volunteer management, and can be a helpful resource in growing and maintaining your volunteer base.

Determining Volunteer Needs

- Develop a list of volunteer roles needed by your Local Program in all categories (Management Team, sports, communications, fundraising, etc.). Be mindful of the skills and time required to do these roles effectively.
- Maintain job/position descriptions for volunteer roles, including training duties
- Set firm but reasonable expectations for your volunteers. A sample list of expectations might include:
 - o Complete the required volunteer registrations forms and trainings
 - o Fulfill the responsibilities of your assignment
 - o Set a good example for the athletes
 - o Model good sportsmanship and behavior
 - o Be continually vigilant and aware of the safety of the athletes
 - o Fulfill your commitment to the role, and consider additional training that can increase your involvement with Special Olympics

Volunteer Recruitment & Engagement

There are a number of steps Local Programs can take in order to increase your volunteer force. Below are suggestions that might enhance your recruitment efforts:

- Appoint a volunteer committee to assist with recruiting and training

- Ensure that all recruitment efforts have a clear message, demonstrate need, and have a follow-up plan. Aim to answer the following questions for volunteers when recruiting them:
 - What is the time commitment?
 - What skills are required?
 - How does the volunteer follow-up if interested?
- Utilize your communication channels (website, social media, local news outlets) to share your needs with the community.
- Create and maintain a list or database with volunteers, both prospective and current
- Meet with volunteers directly to better understand their interests, and to pair them with the best opportunity in your Local Program
- Follow up promptly with new recruits, to provide outstanding customer service and to confirm their involvement.
- Upon arrival at a Local Program activity, provide training and mentorship to ensure the best possible experience.
- Ensure that thank you letters and acknowledgement opportunities are part of your Local Program efforts, as part of existing activities or by creating a dedicated volunteer appreciation event or campaign.
- Gather feedback from volunteers about their experience, to keep a consistent focus on improvement.

Recruiting volunteers can be done in a variety of ways, and can target many groups in your community. Below is a partial list of target recruitment areas for volunteers:

- Local sports organizations and leagues
- Community volunteer centers
- Sponsors and local businesses, paying special attention to those that offer volunteer hours to employees and/or donations to charities based on hours served by employees
- High schools / colleges
- Families of athletes
- Service groups

Volunteer Registration

All volunteers must register and receive approval by the Special Olympics Accredited Program. The registration procedure and forms are important tools for ensuring the safety and well-being of all athletes and volunteers. In compliance with Special Olympics, Inc. policy, all U.S. Programs must register and classify volunteers.

Class A Volunteers

All volunteers must complete a Class A Volunteer Registration Form if they meet any of the following criteria:

- Has regular close, physical contact with athletes
- Is in positions of authority, trust, or supervision with athletes
- Handles cash or other assets of the Local Program
- Chaperones athletes and may stay overnight or transport athletes

The Class A Volunteer Application can be located at the following site:

<https://app.voluntaro.com/WI/Application>.

All Volunteer Registration Forms must be submitted and volunteers must be approved by the Accredited Program prior to commencing any Class A Volunteer duties. All volunteers listed as coaches or chaperones, or listed on a housing form for competition must have a current, approved Class A Volunteer form on file. Proof of Protective Behaviors training completion should also be on file prior to athlete training and competition. *

** In the United States, Special Olympics, Inc. requires that all Class A Volunteers complete Protective Behaviors training PRIOR to commencing any Local Program volunteer activities. If serving as a coach, Concussion Training must also be completed.*

All Class A volunteers must undergo a background check. A background check is completed by the Accredited Program using a national vendor. Motor vehicle checks are required for anyone driving at the direction of or on behalf of the organization or if an applicant answers "Yes" to any of the questions regarding suspension or revocation of a driver's license. **

**If under the age of 18, the volunteer does not have to complete a background check until their 18th birthday.

The Accredited Program may make a determination regarding the level of the volunteer's involvement based on the aforementioned background check. The Accredited Program will notify the volunteer and Local Program if they are unable to assist as a Class A Volunteer.

All volunteer information must be renewed every three years.

Class B Volunteers

Class B Volunteers include volunteers who participate in one-day, day-of events, walk-on volunteers, or Healthy Athletes volunteers. Class B Volunteers have more limited contact with athletes, and do not have any contact with a Program's cash or assets.

While Class B Volunteers have limited contact with athletes, a strict registration protocol must still be followed, in accordance with your Accredited Program's procedure.

- Class B Volunteers must sign in and produce a valid photo ID on the day of the event for which they volunteer.
- When checking in as a Class B Volunteer, the volunteer must provide the following information:
 - Name
 - Complete Address
 - Phone Number
 - Group Affiliation (if any)

Disqualifiers

In order to ensure the safety of Special Olympics athletes, Unified Sports partners, and other participants, Special Olympics is selective with its volunteers. While Special Olympics is committed to a culture of teamwork and inclusion for all, there are disqualifiers for potential volunteers.

Disqualifiers for Being a Volunteer Include, but are not limited to:

- A felony arrest / prosecution
- Child abuse, or any role in causing a child's death
- Kidnapping
- Sexual abuse or misconduct
- Neglect of a child or any other individual for whom the potential volunteer has held responsibility
- Arson
- Driving while intoxicated (DWI), driving under the influence (DUI), or comparable offenses; or three or more moving violations within the past three years, disqualifies the volunteer from driving on behalf of Special Olympics for seven years

Coaches

Having a well-trained team of coaches is critical to the success of Special Olympics and Local Programs, as well as ensuring the happiness and development of athletes.

There are a number of targeting sources for Special Olympics coaches:

- Sports organizations
- Sports leagues
- Colleges and universities – including athletic departments, sororities and fraternities, academic departments, and/or residential halls
- Service groups

- Local officials' associations
- Adaptive Physical Education and Physical Education teachers
- Special Education and General Education teachers
- Coaches (current or former) at the elementary or secondary school level
- College students in Special Education programs

Types of Special Olympics Volunteer Coach Roles

There are several roles for a volunteer who wishes to become involved as a **certified** Special Olympics Coach. While some coaches may choose to remain a Sports Volunteer, other coaches may strive to increase their level of certification.

Special Olympics is continually evolving and enhancing its coach education system to meet the needs of volunteer coaches and the athletes they coach. The Coach Education System identifies basic minimum requirements for all coaches and recommendations for continuing education. The intent is to assist Special Olympics Programs in designing and providing quality sports training for Special Olympics coaches and ultimately the athletes.

Coaches who wish to increase their coaching level can follow the recommended U.S.A. Coach Education System outlined below. Please consult your Accredited Program regarding any change in requirements and language (i.e. Assistant Coach vs. Sports Volunteer) with respect to coach certification.

Sport Volunteer / Assistant (Entry Level Requirements)

- Class A Form / Complete Background Check
- Special Olympics General Orientation
- Protective Behaviors Training
- Concussion Course

Level 1 – Certified Coach (Core Coaching Knowledge in Traditional Special Olympics and/or Unified Sports)

- All Sport Assistant requirements
- Coaching Special Olympics Athletes – online course via Human Kinetics Coach Education (formerly ASEP) or in person training conducted by a Program approved trainer

Level 2 – Certified Coach* (Sports Specific Knowledge in Traditional Special Olympics or Unified Sports)

- All Level 1 requirements
- Sports Specific Course – online for those sports where online courses have been developed or in-person sport specific training

** NOTE: Level required of Head Coaches attending Special Olympics USA Games in the specific sport being coached.*

Level 3 – Certified Coach** (Advanced Coaching Knowledge)

- All Level 2 requirements
- Principles of Coaching Course – online, or in-person training conducted by a Program approved trainer

*** NOTE: Level required of Head Coaches attending World Games.*

Continuing Education

In order to maintain certification, a coach must update the above certifications every three years. Additional coach education is encouraged, and is available in a variety of locations. . There are , and can be found in a variety of locations. non-comprehensive list of courses approved for continuing education include:

- Special Olympics Resources:
<https://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials>
- Special Olympics Learning Portal: <https://learn.specialolympics.org/>
- National Federation of State High School Associations:
<https://nfhslearn.com/>
- Other Special Olympics approved courses for re-certification – courses that help a coach become a better coach will be accepted. However, third party courses must be approved by Program headquarters

Retaining Coaches

Retaining coaches is critical for maintaining trust and relationships with athletes, Unified partners, volunteers, and families. There are a number of ways to retain coaches and build a stronger Special Olympics community.

- Provide an initial meeting to review coaching role.
- Empower the coach to be the leader of their team.
- Ensure effective communication prior to and throughout the season.
- Offer opportunities for input, including the opportunity to debrief after the season in preparation for the next year.
- Encourage continued education, and provide recognition at every new training and/or level of coach certification.
- Establish your own Coach of the Year Award; submit entry to Special Olympics North America Coach of the Year Program.
- Promote advancement in the movement, such as selection to coach at a National, Regional, or World Games.

- Invite coaches to participate in other events throughout the year.

Families and Caregivers

Families and caregivers – parents, siblings, and others who play a key role in direct support for athletes – are a vital component of the Special Olympics movement. These individuals engage at various levels of activity and participation within the Local Program, but all can prove valuable to its success.

Communication with, and outreach to, families and caregivers is a key role within the Local Program. When possible, the Local Program should maintain a position on its Management Team with specific goals of providing opportunities for family involvement. Duties of this role may include:

- Keep regular contact with families directly, and coordinate with communications team for additional outreach through their channels. A family newsletter could be a consideration as part of the communications strategy.
- Create a welcome letter for new athletes and their families, which includes opportunities for families and caregivers to volunteer with the Local Program.
- Host meetings and events dedicated to families and caregivers, such as:
 - A new family orientation session.
 - Hospitality events for family networking, and to gather contact information from participants.
 - An annual picnic highlighting the sports season.
 - Regular meetings to get feedback.

Working with Agency/Provider Staff & Volunteers

Older athletes who participate in Special Olympics may live in group homes or other supported living environments, and may be assisted by trained caregivers. Turnover of group homes staff members is quite high for a variety of reasons, and you may find challenges communicating with staff. Local Programs need to establish the most effective means for communicating with direct care staff, articulating expectations and needs for their support. Some staff may have interest in joining your Local Program as a coach, volunteer, or Unified Sports partner.

Engaging families in any of the diverse roles in Special Olympics will strengthen your Local Program. Visit the Special Olympics Resources page on families to explore ways to actively engage athletes' families and caregivers:

<https://www.specialolympics.org/our-work/families>

Codes of Conduct

The following are sample codes of conduct for Local Programs. Check with your Accredited Program to see which Code of Conduct is currently in use.

Special Olympics Coach Code of Conduct

Special Olympics is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all coaches to honor sport and the mission and vision of Special Olympics. All Coaches agree to observe the following:

Respect for Others

- I will respect the rights, dignity, and worth of athletes, coaches, volunteers, friends, and spectators in Special Olympics.
- I will treat everyone with respect and equally, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, nationality, race, age, religion, disability or ability.

Ensure A Positive Experience

- I will ensure that for each athlete I coach, the time spent with Special Olympics is positive.
- I will respect the talent, developmental stage, and goals of each athlete.
- I will ensure each athlete competes in events that challenge that athlete's potential and are appropriate to that athlete's ability.
- I will be fair, considerate, and honest with athletes.
- I will ensure that accurate scores are provided for entry of an athlete into any event.
- I will instruct each athlete to perform to the best of the athlete's ability at all preliminary competitions and finals competition in accordance with the Special Olympics Sports Rules.

Act Professionally and Take Responsibility for My Actions

- My language, manner, punctuality, preparation, and presentation will demonstrate high standards.
- I will display control, respect, dignity, and professionalism to all involved in the sport.
- I will encourage athletes to demonstrate the same qualities.
- I will not drink alcohol, smoke, or take illegal drugs while representing Special Olympics at training sessions or during competition.
- I will refrain from any form of personal abuse towards athletes and others – including verbal, physical, and emotional abuse, whether in

person or through any form of communication (social media, email, phone calls, etc.)

- I will not bully or harass any individual.
- I will be alert to any form of abuse from other sources directed towards athletes in my care.

Quality Service to The Athletes

- I will seek continual improvement through performance evaluations and ongoing coach education.
- I will be knowledgeable about the Sports Rules and skills of the sport(s) I coach.
- I will provide a planned training program for individual practices and the season.
- I will keep copies of the medical, training, and competition records for each athlete I coach.

Name: _____

Coach or Asst. Coach
Circle Role

Date: _____

Special Olympics Family Code of Conduct

We hope as family members, you will embrace the spirit of Special Olympics and help to provide a competition and training environment that enhances athlete character and skill development. The following Family Code of Conduct should be emphasized during training, competition, and special events at any level – including sub-Program, Accredited Program, National, Regional and World.

As a Special Olympics family member, I pledge the following:

- I will let my athlete choose the sports in which he/she would like to participate. I will not force my choice upon him/her.
- I will remember that athletes participate to have fun and that the game is for them; not for the family members.
- I will see to it that my athlete's medical form is up-to-date, complete, and on file.
- I will learn the rules of the game and the SOI policies before I complain or protest.
- I (and my guests) will be a positive role model for my athlete and encourage sportsmanship by showing respect and courtesy, and by demonstrating positive support for all athletes, coaches, officials, and spectators at every game, practice, or competition.

- I understand that I play a vital role in the health and safety of my athlete's participation. I have a responsibility to assist Special Olympics in providing for the health and safety of all athletes by reporting suspicious behavior, talking to my child about personal safety, dropping off and picking up my child/guard from Special Olympics events at the times designated by the organization (not excessively earlier or later than said established times), and any and all other reasonable measures to assist in the protection of Special Olympics athletes.
- I (and my guests) will never engage in any kind of unsportsmanlike conduct, such as booing and taunting, refusing to shake hands, or using profane language and gestures with any official, coach, or family member.
- I will never encourage any behaviors or practices that would endanger the health and well-being of the athletes.
- I will not make inappropriate or unwanted physical, verbal, or sexual advances on others, in person or through any form of communication (social media, email, phone calls, etc.)
- I will not bully or harass any individual.
- I will teach my athlete to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility or violence.
- I will demand that my athlete treat other athletes, coaches, officials, and spectators with respect, regardless of race, creed, color, sex, or ability.
- I will teach my athlete that doing one's best is more important than winning, so that my athlete will never feel defeated by the outcome of a game or his/her performance.
- I will praise my athlete for competing fairly and trying hard, and I will make my athlete feel like a winner every time.
- I will never ridicule or yell at my athlete or other participants for making a mistake or losing a competition.
- I will emphasize skill development and practices, and how they benefit my athlete over winning. I will also de-emphasize games and competition in lower age groups.
- I will promote the emotional and physical well-being of the athletes ahead of any personal desire that I may have for my athlete to win.
- I will respect the officials and their authority during games and competition, and will never question, discuss, or confront coaches during competitions. Instead, I will take time to speak with coaches at an agreed upon time and place.

- I will demand a sports environment for my athlete that is free from drugs and alcohol, and I will refrain from their use at all sports events and competitions.
- I will smoke/chew tobacco only in designated areas.
- I will refrain from coaching my athlete or other athletes during competitions and practices if I am not the assigned coach.

As a Special Olympics Accredited Program family member, I also understand that if I fail to abide by the aforementioned rules and guidelines, I may be subject to disciplinary action that could include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- Verbal warning by officials, coaches, and/or sub-Program and Accredited Program personnel
- Game suspension with written documentation of incident kept on file in the Accredited Program Office
- Written warning
- Game forfeit through official or coach
- Season suspension
- Misbehavior Report submitted to Event Director

I hereby certify that I have reviewed, understood, and agreed to this Code of Conduct.

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Signature of Family Member

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Athlete's Name

Date

Local Program/sub-Program

