

## Recruitment & Training

### Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of Special Olympics. The thoughtful recruitment, coordination, and retention of volunteers is critical. This process includes a number of important tasks, such as recruiting, matching skills to roles, arranging appropriate training for volunteers, and acknowledging their contributions. Important skill sets for a volunteer Local Program Manager include good organizational, interpersonal, and communication skills. The objective is to recruit, train, organize, recognize, and retain volunteers.

#### *Action Steps for Volunteer Management*

- Obtain a list of roles, qualifications, and time needed for volunteers regarding specific activities
- Maintain position descriptions for volunteers and include training duties
- Appoint a volunteer committee to assist with recruiting and training
- Follow up with referrals from the Accredited Program or local volunteer agencies in a timely manner
- Hold interviews as necessary for potential volunteers to determine interests and skills
- Work with the Volunteer Coordinator and Management Team to assign volunteers to appropriate positions
- Arrange in-service training for volunteers as necessary
- Provide a way for volunteers to offer feedback about their experience
- Ensure that volunteers are properly supervised at events
- Ensure that all volunteers complete the appropriate volunteer registration forms
- Create and maintain a current volunteer database
- Ensure that thank you letters, appreciation notes, or activities are provided to thank volunteers
- Update appropriate web pages with volunteer needs

#### *Volunteer Expectations*

- Complete the required volunteer registrations forms and trainings
- Fulfill the responsibilities of your assignment
- Set a good example for the athletes
- Model good sportsmanship and behavior
- Be continually vigilant and aware of the safety of the athletes
- Be loyal to your commitment to your Special Olympics Accredited Program
- Grow, learn, and challenge yourself through your involvement with Special Olympics

#### *Increasing Volunteers*

There are a number of steps Local Program Managers and committee members should take in order to increase the number of volunteers. Below are some tips to increase volunteer efforts:

- Determine needs and skills required
- Establish programs based on athlete numbers and opportunities athletes would like

- Advertise volunteer needs for local events through social media
- Advertise coach needs as sports develop

#### *Where are potential targets for volunteers?*

- College volunteer centers
- Sports organizations
- Sports leagues
- Community volunteer centers
- Sponsor volunteers
- High schools
- Families of Young Athletes™
- Service groups

#### *How do I target these groups? How do I recruit them?*

- Ensure that all recruitment efforts have a clear message and follow-up plan.
- Consider the following questions:
  - What is the time commitment?
  - What skills are required?
  - How does the volunteer follow-up if interested?
- Partner with sponsors to offer high-level volunteer roles for day events, such as venue managers
- Research local businesses that may offer employee volunteer hours and donate to charities based on hours served by employees
- Develop volunteer appreciation acknowledgements to maintain the volunteer base
- Invite volunteers to serve on Management Teams and utilize their talents to grow your Local Program

### **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 success of athletes and Unified Partners.

#### ***Targeting Coaches***

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

- Sports organizations and leagues
- Colleges and universities – including their 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

- Former coaches at elementary, middle school/junior high, and high school levels
- College students in Special Education programs
- Partnerships with colleges, youth sports organizations, and professional clubs

### ***Special Olympics North America Coach Education System Overview***

North America staff are continually evolving and enhancing our 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.

### **Coaching Guides**

Coaching Guides are sport-specific training manuals designed to aid coaches, teachers and family members in training individuals with intellectual disabilities. Each guide provides an overview of the sport, equipment, facilities, long-term goals, short-term objectives, task analysis, teaching suggestions and more. *Coaching Guides* are available on the Special Olympics, Inc. website at [SpecialOlympics.org](https://www.specialolympics.org).

### **CERTIFICATION AND RECERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS**

#### **Certification**

The required certification process requires all coaches to complete the SOWI on-line General Coaches' Certification (available at [www.specialolympicswisconsin.org](http://www.specialolympicswisconsin.org) ). Coaches will be required to complete the general certification every three years. General certifications expire on December 31 of the third calendar year from the date the certification was completed.

#### **State Games Certification Requirement**

Advancement to State-level competition requires certified coaches to be registered as part of an advancing delegation and in attendance at the State Games. Each team advancing to State is required to have a certified coach (i.e. for two basketball teams advancing to State, two certified individuals are required). Likewise, each individual sport that advances to State-level competition is also required to have a certified coach. Coaches may only serve as the certified coach for one sport at the same State tournament. Certification must be completed no later than the Thursday following the State Games registration deadline in order to attend that State Games event. Teams or groups of individuals who do not have a certified coach who can attend the Games will not be allowed to advance to the State level. Teams or individuals found to be without the certified coach at the Games will be ejected.

Effective January 1, 2023, all certified coaches are required to take the "Fitness for the Sport Coach" training module on the SO Learn Portal or a SOWI-approved equivalent. This training only needs to be taken once.

#### **Sport-Specific Certification**

Sport-specific certification will continue to be offered, but will no longer act as the requirement to advance to the state games. Sport-specific certification will be required for all coaches wishing to attend National or World Competitions (USA Games, National Invitational Tournaments, etc.). Coach certifications expire on December 31 of the third calendar year from the date of the sport-specific coaches training that was attended. In order to maintain a current sport-specific certification, a coach must complete the General

Coaches Certification or retake the sport-specific certified training school prior to the December 31 expiration date.

All SOWI sport-specific trainings include SOWI information, risk management, safety, Code of Conduct, policies, etc., as well as a sport-specific component. When possible, trainings will be advertised on the calendar on the SOWI website and additionally, a flyer will be sent to Local Program managers to advertise to their volunteers. Local Program managers are able to schedule a training for their Local Program and/or community by directly contacting the Director of Health Programs. The process for a Local Program manager to schedule a training is as follows:

- 1) Contact the Director of Health Programs
- 2) Determine the date, time, location, and number of anticipated participants
- 3) The Director of Health Programs will work directly with a trainer to make arrangements for paperwork and training materials. When possible, SOWI will advertise the training on the SOWI website and it will be open for all coaches to attend.

#### **Minimum age to act as a coach for SOWI is 16**

Class A Volunteers who are 16 or 17 years old and wish to coach at each practice and competition must be under the supervision of a SOWI registered Class A volunteer who is 18 years or older (the Class A volunteer need not be a certified coach). In order to act as the certified coach at State Games Tournament, a minor coach must complete the general coaching certification. Minor coaches may not act as a chaperone. Athletes must be chaperoned by a registered Class A volunteer who is 16 or older under the 1:4 chaperone to athlete ratio.

#### ***Retaining Coaches***

Retaining coaches is critical. Coaches build trust and relationships with athletes, Unified Sports<sup>®</sup> 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.
- Provide ongoing training opportunities.
- Empower the coach to be the leader of their team.
- Ensure effective communication prior to and throughout the season. Offer the opportunity to debrief after the season in preparation for the next year.
- Provide recognition at every level of coach certification.
- Establish your own Coach of the Year Award; submit entry to Special Olympics North America Coach of the Year Program.
- Identify coach needs through an Input Council and various communication pathways.
- Incentivize continued education (advancement to higher competition) to include, but not limited to, being selected to coach at a National, Regional, or World Games.
- Invite coaches to participate in other events throughout the year.

#### **Athlete Growth**

Special Olympics Local **Programs** are always growing. It is important to reach as many athletes as possible to help maintain growth. Below are a number of tips to assist with outreach to new and current athletes.

### ***Create Links to Local Groups & Agencies Serving Individuals with Disabilities***

- Partner with Parks and Recreation Departments for opportunities to include individuals with intellectual disabilities in their current Programs. Connect links between Special Olympics and Parks and Recreation websites for more information on how to get involved.
- Connect with all agencies and community services – such as group homes – to bring in older athletes or maintain current athlete base as they age out of school.

### ***Advertise Locally & Utilize Social Media***

- Create website and social media accounts. Some social media platforms to consider are Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
- Advertise upcoming events and include information such as how to join, how to volunteer, and how to donate.
- Local **Programs** can use relevant hashtags in their social media posts.
- Abide by any program-established policies.

### ***Target Local Schools***

- Introduce the Unified Champion Schools program, which is a comprehensive model implemented in the U.S. that combines Unified Sports<sup>®</sup>, Inclusive Youth Leadership, and Whole School Engagement to create school and community climates of acceptance and inclusion. This can begin as early as kindergarten with Young Athletes™, and continue throughout elementary, middle, and high school with Unified Sports<sup>®</sup> and/or related sports and leadership opportunities.
- Work with local independent school districts, Special Education Directors, or Athletic Directors. Partner with them to add Special Olympics opportunities to the school day or as a part of after-school programs with a focus on the middle schools.
- Speak at parent meetings and/or teacher professional development days
- Provide Special Olympics and Unified Sports<sup>®</sup> information to students and their families through newsletters and brochures.

### ***Target Young Athletes™***

- Partner with local groups that involve people with intellectual disabilities, such as The Arc and the Down Syndrome Society. Present information about the Young Athletes™ program at their meetings, in their newsletters, etc.
- Target inclusive preschools and share information as to how they can incorporate the program during the day, and encourage teachers to become coaches. Showcase athlete talents at a Young Athletes™ festival.
- Offer a Young Athletes™ Festival at Local Games and invite the public. To attract new families, incorporate Healthy Athletes<sup>®</sup> opportunities that begin with a Healthy Athletes<sup>®</sup> screening.

### ***Engage Local College Recreation Departments with Special Olympics College***

Special Olympics College (SO College) Clubs function as an official club on campus. SO College Clubs connect college students and individuals with intellectual disabilities through sport to build friendships and help lead the social justice movement of Special Olympics.

- Special Olympics College Club programs are made up of three core elements: Unified Sports®, Youth Leadership, and opportunities for Full Campus Engagement.
- [http://www.specialolympics.org/Sections/What\\_We\\_Do/Special\\_Olympics\\_College\\_Clubs.aspxFundraising](http://www.specialolympics.org/Sections/What_We_Do/Special_Olympics_College_Clubs.aspxFundraising)