

Your Questions Answered:

FAQ'S- Frequently Asked Questions

What is a “Day of Event Sport Competition Volunteer?”

The most common type of volunteers SOIA has is a “Day of Event Sport Competition Volunteer.” This volunteering position is for State Competitions, Area Competitions, Challenge Days, Play Days, and Unified Sport Days. Job assignment examples for this volunteer position include- score keeping, timing, measuring a jump or throw, ball retrieving, recording times/scores, escorting athletes to and from events, lining athletes up for an event, handing out awards, assisting with lunch/snacks, or other related jobs.

How to be a Day of Event Sport Competition Volunteer....

1. Sign up on our website on the volunteer page www.soiowa.org/volunteer
2. Volunteers will be given event specific information (via email, 1 week prior to the event).
3. Volunteers will be given a job assignment based on what job they signed up for, assigned a job by a staff member or event director prior to the event, or assigned a job by a staff member or event director the day of the event. Job assignments are done differently for each event and are subject to change prior to or the day of the event based on needs.
4. Volunteers show up the day of the event at the designated time and location to assist our athletes in various athletic activities and assist staff & event directors in running the event.

Being a Sport Competition Volunteer is a great way to become involved and there is always a need for these types of volunteers! For questions contact Elin Phipps, (ephipps@soiowa.org) or the designated staff member on the sign up form online.

What is a “Key Volunteer/Event Director?”

Key Volunteers/Event Directors are specialized volunteers for a specific event/duty who are needed the day of the event for a State Competition or Area Competition. This type of volunteer is typically someone who has experience and knowledge of Special Olympics Iowa athletic competitions and/or experience and knowledge of a specific sport/position. Examples of Key Volunteer positions include- official, judge, clerk of course, referee, umpire, marshal, starter, inspector of equipment, court manager, head escort, head recorder, etc. An Event Director is a type of Key Volunteer who is the person designated to be in charge of a specific event or area. Examples of Event Directors include- Awards Event Director, Tennis Event Director, 100m Dash Event Director, Shot Put Event Director, etc. Key Volunteers and Event Directors often give other Day of Event Sport Competition Volunteer” direction for the event they are in charge of. Depending on the event, additional training, direction and time may need to be dedicated for this volunteer position prior to the event. Being a Key Volunteer is a great way to become even more involved with Special Olympics Iowa and volunteer in an area based on your interest and expertise! To be a Key Volunteer/Event Director contact Elin Phipps, (ephipps@soiowa.org).

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How do I volunteer with a Large Group or have a “Partnership” for a Special Olympics Iowa event?

We welcome and encourage large groups to sign up together to volunteer at our events. Large groups may include people from a family, sports teams, college/high school/middle school students, school groups/organizations/classes/clubs, religious groups/youth groups, corporate businesses/offices/departments, Special Olympics Iowa sponsors, or other related groups that want to volunteer together. We typically consider groups of 10 or more a large group. Members of a large group will hold a Day of Event Sport Competition Volunteer position.

We do our best to accommodate large groups and take specific request into consideration as much as possible. When making volunteer assignments for bigger State Competitions and multiple venue/multiple sport events, we try to keep as many group members together as possible.

Assignments are often made on a first come first serve basis or based on a group's past volunteer assignment history. Age is taken into consideration when making large group assignments. For school aged children please have the appropriate number of chaperones for your group.

How to sign up a large group

See more information on the “Register to Volunteer” section of our volunteer page
www.soiowa.org/volunteer

How to have a “partnership” for an event.....

Special Olympics Iowa has groups that provide a set amount of volunteers for a specific event or program year after year. If you are interested in having a large group from a company, school, or another organization take ownership of a specific Special Olympics Iowa event and provide volunteers, please contact the Director of Volunteers, Elin Phipps, (ephipps@soiowa.org) to see what possibilities are available.

Note: Special Olympics Iowa Summer Games, an annual State Competition in May located in Ames, IA on the ISU campus, is a great volunteer opportunity for large groups. This is our largest event that has a specific sign up designated for large groups.

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Healthy Athlete Volunteers:

If you have knowledge and expertise in health promotions, physical fitness, or a specific medical field and are interested in volunteering for one of our Healthy Athlete clinical, contact Wendy Olinger, (wolinger@soiowa.org).

Medical, Nursing, First Aid, & Athletic Training Volunteers:

Volunteer medical personal are always needed at our various sporting competitions. If you have training/certifications in a medical area and would like to volunteer for an event, contact Rhonda Schwarzkopf, (rschwarzkopf@soiowa.org).

Other Special Olympics Iowa Volunteer Opportunities:

Do you have another skill, talent, hobby that you would like to share with Special Olympics Iowa? Let us know! We always welcome volunteer photographer and videographers at our events. Examples of other groups and individuals that have volunteered at events- Knights of Columbus, Iowa State University Cheerleaders & Football players, high school cheerleaders, bagpipers, photo booth vendors, face painters, and many more!

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Is there a minimum age requirement for volunteers? Can families volunteer together?

We typically state children ages 10 and up are able to volunteer at SOIA events depending on the event or situation. If your child is younger than 10, please contact our state office or the designated person for a particular event. We ask that children have a parent/guardian, or designated chaperone. Please indicate to the designated SOIA contact for the event/staff member that your child will be volunteering so we can put them in an age appropriate volunteer position and keep them with their designated chaperone. We welcome families to volunteer together.

Can school aged children volunteer as a group?

If you are bringing school aged children as a large group to volunteer at a SOIA event (such as a middle school, high school, school club, youth group, etc.) we ask that you bring that appropriate number of chaperones that you see fit for your group.

Is there volunteer jobs/positions at SOIA events that are fitting for a person who may not as mobile or may not be able to be as physically active?

For most events we do have volunteer jobs that don't require high physical activity, long periods of standing, or heavy lifting. Please contact the designated event director to make a specific request so we can find a volunteer position that best suits you.

Can I use SOIA volunteer hours towards a high school or college service requirement?

Yes, we have several school aged students volunteer at SOIA events. Just contact our state office or an event leader on site if you need someone to verify that the student was at the event volunteering.

Can I use SOIA volunteer hours towards work volunteer paid time off?

Yes, we have several individuals and groups come with their work places and/or use volunteer paid time off. Just contact our state office or an event leader on site if you need someone to verify that the employee was at the event volunteering.

Can my work place (business/company), organization, school, or other type of larger group volunteer for an event together?

Yes, we do work with large groups volunteering together for events. Your group can sign up to volunteer together. If your business/company, organization, school, or other large group would like to join a volunteer partnership for an event by providing volunteers for a specific event, contact us.

What is the best event to bring a large group, such as a school or company to?

Summer Games located in Ames, IA takes place annually in May and there are several volunteers needed at this event. It is our largest and most well-known Special Olympics Iowa event.

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Do you have to have any training or are there any requirements to be a SOIA volunteer/participant?

For the most events, "Day of Event Sport Competition Volunteers" there is no prior training or experience required. There may be some sporting competitions (such as State Equestrian, volunteers working with horses) that are closed to the general public due to prior training or experience required. A sex offender/background check may be done on volunteers depending on the event to ensure the safety of our athletes. Fundraising Participant requirements depend on the event but there are typically duties prior to the event. A fundraising event coordinator will be in contact with the participants. Key Volunteers/Event Directors, Coaches, Area Directors, and other related positions have prior training/experience before working the event or holding that particular position.

Do I need knowledge or experience in a specific sport before volunteering?

For most events "Day of Event Sport Competition Volunteers" there is no prior training or experience required. There may be some sporting competitions (such as State Equestrian, volunteers working with horses) that are closed to the general public due to prior training or experience required. If you have knowledge or experience in a specific sport, be sure to let us know!

Do I need knowledge or experience with persons with intellectual disabilities before volunteering at a SOIA event?

For "Day of Event Sport Competition Volunteers" there is no prior training or experience with persons with intellectual disabilities required, although it is helpful. We encourage everyone at our SOIA events to be mindful of their words and actions when working with or being around persons with intellectual disabilities.

I have volunteered for SOIA events in the past but I want to become more involved. What are my options?

Here are some suggestions to become more involved: Check out our other programs and events, we have volunteer opportunities all year long! Lead and gather a group to come volunteer at an event, form a team for a fundraiser, create a fundraiser, be a key volunteer/event director at a sport competition, become a Unified Partner, create a Unified Club (for students), or become a coach.

What does a typical year look like for events for SOIA?

Visit www.soiowa.org/events to stay up to date with our SOIA events.