



A Handbook for Athlete Leaders

Athlete Leadership
2018

Special Olympics



Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation for the Benefit of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities



Table of Contents

Topic	Page
Table of Contents	2
Part A	
Introduction Information	4
Part B- Facts about Athlete Leadership and Special Olympics	
What Is Athlete Leadership?	6-8
The Mission of Special Olympics	9-15
What Makes Special Olympics Unique	16
Facts About Special Olympics	17
Part C- Introduction to Athlete Leadership	
Roles for Athletes	19-20
Athletes Enrolled Follow Special Olympics Eligibility Guidelines	21
Sample Athlete Leader Contract	22
Roles of Mentor	23
Stages of Mentorship	24
Sample Mentor Contract	25
Athlete Leadership Reporting Form	26
Athlete Leader Contract	27
Mentor Contract	28
Athlete Leadership Conference Feedback	29



Part A

Introduction



Part A

Introduction Information

Complete the information about your partner and your partner will complete information about you. Your partner must be someone you do not know.

- My name is _____
- I have the pleasure of introducing _____
- He/she is from Special Olympics _____
(Name of Local Program)
- _____ has been involved in Special Olympics for ____ years.
- Say, "If she/he had a room full of money, she/he would

- _____



Part B

Facts about Athlete Leadership And Special Olympics



Part B

Foundation

The Mission of Special Olympics

To provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

Goal of Special Olympics

The ultimate goal of Special Olympics is to help persons with intellectual disabilities participate as productive and respected members of society at large, by offering them a fair opportunity to develop and demonstrate their skills and talents through sports training and competition, and by increasing the public's awareness of their capabilities and needs.

Value Statement of Athlete Leadership

Special Olympics empowers athletes to be contributing and respected members of Special Olympics and society. We support athlete-leaders on and off the playing field.

Purpose of Athlete Leadership

The purpose of Athlete Leadership is empowering athletes to develop leadership skills and utilize their voices and abilities to undertake meaningful leadership roles, influence change in the Special Olympics movement and create inclusive communities around the world.

Definition of Athlete Leadership

Through organized training and practical experiences, Athlete Leadership prepares athletes to undertake meaningful positions of influence and leadership throughout the Special Olympics organization, both on and off the playing field.



Basic Concepts of Athlete Leadership:

- 1) Athlete leadership is fundamental to Special Olympics being an athlete-centered organization.
- 2) Every Special Olympics athlete has leadership abilities that can contribute to the movement.
- 3) Athlete leadership starts with an athlete making an informed choice of leadership role(s).
- 4) Athlete leadership has a powerful effect on athletes' self-esteem and self-confidence.
- 5) Athletes require education in leadership skills before being placed in positions of responsibility.
- 6) Athlete leadership includes courses that guide athletes toward a variety of roles, including: board/committee membership, games management, public speaking, coaching, officiating, and youth leadership.
- 7) After attending courses, athletes need both immediate and real opportunities to practice newly-learned leadership skills.
- 8) Most athletes benefit from the support of a committed athlete-centered mentor whose role evolves as the athlete leader becomes more capable in their leadership role.
- 9) Special Olympics staff, volunteers and families must be educated to ensure they value and support the involvement of athletes in meaningful roles.
- 10) Skills learned in Athlete Leadership enrich athletes' abilities to become more involved and respected in the community.

Milestones

The First Mission Statement for Athlete Leadership

To empower athletes to develop leadership skills and utilize their voices to assume meaningful leadership roles, influence change in the Special Olympics movement, and educate communities around the world that results in positive life changes.

– Athlete Leadership Summit, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, March 2011

Current Mission Statement for Athlete Leadership

The purpose of Athlete Leadership is empowering athletes to develop leadership skills and utilize their voices and abilities to undertake meaningful leadership roles, influence change in the Special Olympics movement and create inclusive communities around the world.

-- Athlete Leadership Summit October 2013, North America



What Is Special Olympics Athlete Leadership?

Athlete Leader Role Options	Training/Resources to Support
Public Speaking	Sargent Shriver Global Messenger Training
Committees, Input Councils, and Boards of Directors members	Governance training: Handbook to Inclusive Boards
Team Captain, Assistant Coach, Coach, Officials	Athletes as Coaches/Officials Special Olympics Coach Certification Trainings Sport Federation Coach/Official Certification
Helping Local Programs with Technology	Technology Training (Emailing; Internet; Search Engines)
Healthy Lifestyle	Athletes as Peer Health Coaches, Healthy Athlete Overview, Healthy Lifestyle training.
Volunteering	Volunteering Training
Fundraising	Athletes Assisting with Fundraising Training

It is Special Olympics' strong belief that every athlete and mentor/speech coach should be offered the best training possible to fulfill their new roles. Look at the different role options for athlete leaders as well as the courses that can be offered to fulfill those roles.

Part of the process in the Introduction to Athlete Leadership Course is to determine what each athlete really likes to do and what course is right for them!

In the Athlete Leadership Training handout, let's briefly review the courses listed in each area.



The Mission of Special Olympics

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The Mission of Special Olympics



Year-round



7 | Athlete Leadership - Global Messenger 1

The Mission of Special Olympics



Sports training



8 | Athlete Leadership - Global Messenger 1



The Mission of Special Olympics



Athletic competition



9 | Athlete Leadership - Global Messenger 1

The Mission of Special Olympics



Olympic-type sports



10 | Athlete Leadership - Global Messenger 1



The Mission of Special Olympics



**Children and
adults (eight
years old or
older)**



11 | Athlete Leadership - Global Messenger 1

The Mission of Special Olympics



**with
intellectual
disabilities**



12 | Athlete Leadership - Global Messenger 1



The Mission of Special Olympics



Develop

Physical

Fitness



13 | Athlete Leadership - Global Messenger 1

The Mission of Special Olympics



Demonstrate

Courage



14 | Athlete Leadership - Global Messenger 1



The Mission of Special Olympics



Experience

Joy



15 | Athlete Leadership - Global Messenger 1

The Mission of Special Olympics



Share gifts, skills

and friendship

with their families



16 | Athlete Leadership - Global Messenger 1



Favorite Part of the Mission

Joy

Courage

Competition

Sharing gifts, Skills & Friendship...

Children/Adults

Physical fitness

Year-round

Olympic-type

Sports Training

Intellectual Disabilities



What Makes Special Olympics Unique?

- No charge to athletes
- Awards for all who compete
- Advancement to higher levels of competition
- All ability levels can participate
- Divisioning gives everyone an opportunity to win



Facts about Special Olympics Iowa

- Special Olympics is for people with intellectual disabilities
- Special Olympians may need to pay a nominal fee to participate
- You must be 8 years old to train and compete; no upper age limit
- 2-7 year olds train only and participate in the Young Athletes Program
- Special Olympics is an international, worldwide organization in over 170 countries
- Special Olympics has 23 sports
- Special Olympics is year-round
- Special Olympics is a sports training and competition program
- Special Olympics offers both team and individual sports
- Unified Sports® is for people with and without intellectual disability



Part C

Introduction to Athlete Leadership



Part C

Roles for Athletes

Input Council Member

You can improve your local program by making suggestions and discussing problems. Find out if your local program or area has an Input Council and become a participating member!

YOUR INPUT IS VALUABLE AND IS NEEDED!

Athletes as Global Messengers

Do you like to talk? You can be trained by Special Olympics in presentation skills to become an expert speaker. We'll even teach you to use PowerPoint to give presentations to schools, community groups, parents, churches.

GIVE A TALK & GET NEW PEOPLE INVOLVED IN SPECIAL OLYMPICS!

Athletes as Coaches

You can become a coach or assistant coach if that is your dream! You will need to make a commitment to attend certification training by the Program office then apply your training. There are many Special Olympics athletes who have become coaches.

BECOME A COACH IF THAT IS YOUR DREAM!

Athletes as Officials

You can become an official if that is your dream! Special Olympics will provide athletes information so they can participate in sport National Governing Body certification programs as an official or other skilled sport personnel. Athletes who have become certified officials have served in that capacity at Local, State, Provincial, National, Regional and World Games.

BECOME AN OFFICIAL IF THAT IS YOUR DREAM!

Athletes on Subprogram and Program Committees or Boards of Directors

You can become a representative of athletes on these very important groups. Training is provided to prepare athletes to participate in Special Olympics programming and policy meetings. Training focuses on awareness and listening skills and reading financial reports. Many Programs have had several athletes on its Board of Directors and others have held key leadership positions in the state.

BECOME A COMMITTEE MEMBER; MAKE IMPORTANT DECISIONS!



A Handbook for Athlete Leaders

Athletes Working with the Media

You can get the Special Olympics WORD out. You can write articles, do television or radio shows, or work with the newspapers. Some Special Olympics athletes have even produced and hosted their own TV show on cable.

JOIN US AND HELP GET THE WORD OUT TO EVERYONE!

Athletes on Management and Sports Development Teams

You can be a valuable asset on a Special Olympics Games or Sport Development Management Team. Some athletes are filling important roles by helping the Program/Subprogram conduct the Games that you compete in.

ASK YOUR PROGRAM WHAT YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE SPECIAL OLYMPICS COMPETITION!

Athletes as Special Olympics Employees

Someday you might be employed by Special Olympics. Several states and the national office have athletes on their payroll as regular employees.

WORK AT GETTING THE SKILLS YOU NEED TO BECOME AN EMPLOYEE!

Athlete Congress Member

The Congress exists in several states and national programs and there's a World Congress. It provides a formal, deliberative process and place for athlete input on programming, policy and other processes of Special Olympics. There have been a total of three World Congresses. Programs offer a Congress Prep Course for those selected to attend the Congress. This ensures the right athletes are able to do all the tasks necessary to have a successful Congress.

BE AN ACTIVE INPUT COUNCIL MEMBER TO BECOME ELIGIBLE TO SERVE IN AN ATHLETE CONGRESS!

Athletes as Volunteers or Donors

Some of you have already done this maybe without realizing it. You've may have helped with bake/candy sales in the past. Perhaps you helped chaperone other athletes for a little while. Many of you have done these leadership roles for Special Olympics when you are not competing.

YOU WILL FIND NEW WAYS TO HELP YOUR PROGRAM EVERYDAY!

Athletes as Mentors or Advocates

You can help fellow athlete leaders by being their Mentor for Governance, at Athlete Leadership University or advocating for their rights when they are having sports or leadership problems.

NOTHING FEELS BETTER THAN HELPING YOUR FELLOW ATHLETES!



Athletes Enrolled Follow Special Olympics Eligibility Guidelines

Identifying Persons with Intellectual Disabilities

A person is considered to have an intellectual disability for purposes of determining his or her eligibility to participate in Special Olympics if that person satisfies any one of the following requirements:

1. The person has been identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability as determined by their localities; or
2. The person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures such as intelligent quotient or “IQ” testing or other measures that are generally accepted within the professional community in that Accredited Program’s nation as being a reliable measurement of the existence of a cognitive delay; or
3. The person has a closely related developmental disability. A “closely related developmental disability” means having functional limitations in both general learning (such as IQ) and in adaptive skills (such as in recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care). However, persons whose functional limitations are based solely on a physical, behavioral, or emotional disability, or a specific learning or sensory disability, are not eligible to participate as Special Olympics athletes, but may be eligible to volunteer for Special Olympics

For example, such volunteers could be partners in Unified Sports if they otherwise meet the separate eligibility requirements for participation in Unified Sports that are set forth in the SOI Sports Rules.

Preserving Flexibility in Identifying Eligible Athletes

An Accredited Program may request limited permission from SOI to depart from the eligibility requirements identified above if the Accredited Program believes that there are exceptional circumstances that warrant such a departure, and so notifies SOI in writing. SOI will consider such requests promptly, but shall have the final authority in determining whether any departure or exception is appropriate.



Roles of the Mentor

1. Serve many purposes such as mentor; speech coach; coach; official; volunteer.
2. Know your athlete.
3. Work with parents, guardians or day training programs, schools and group homes to explain what Athlete Leadership is.
4. Be knowledgeable about Special Olympics.
5. Always give encouragement – especially before a speech, meeting or event.
6. Listen – people want to know what the athlete thinks, not the ideas of the helper.
7. Act as a leadership “coach” and role model
8. Allow the athlete to express him or herself – give help only if asked
9. Value your athlete’s opinions and preferences and help refine and articulate ideas.
10. Provide constructive feedback.
11. Ensure athlete has meaningful positions of leadership.
12. Help athletes stay on task and ensure follow through.
13. Help athlete understand minutes of meetings, after action notes and to do lists
14. Assist athlete with technology and paperwork.
15. Help work through transportation challenges.
16. Help athletes with medical or diet needs.
17. Work one-on-one with your athlete during each course and to help with follow-up tasks.
18. Commit to a partnership with your athlete to make his or her Athlete Leadership experience as meaningful and educational as possible.
19. Be an advocate for your athlete and all athletes.
20. Provide support *as needed*.

Represent Special Olympics professionally and follow the Special Olympics Code of Conduct



Athlete Leadership



Special Olympics

Stages of Mentorship

Athlete leaders benefit from the support of a volunteer **Mentor**. Some athletes may need regular or occasional support throughout their career as a leader. Others may quickly be able to serve in leadership roles independently. At all times, the mentor should reserve their own opinions, while supporting the athlete leader's involvement and ability to make decisions.



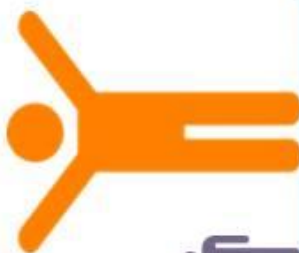
1. Athlete learns about Special Olympics and leadership roles. Mentor highly involved (participates in training, guides athlete leader through practical experiences).



2. Athlete works closely with mentor to develop and refine leadership skills. Mentor helps arrange leadership activity and interacts as needed to ensure results.



3. Athlete participates in leadership roles with minimal support. Mentor may assist in preparation and follow-up, but is virtually invisible as athlete engages in leadership activities.



4. Athlete serves in meaningful leadership roles independently. Mentor's only role is to provide ongoing advice, encouragement and transportation as needed.



Athlete Leadership Reporting Form

Athlete Name:	Team/Delegation:
Athlete Email:	
Event Date:	Event Name:
Event Location (Ex: Name of School, Name of Event, Town)	What was your role at the event? <input type="checkbox"/> Global Messenger <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer
Approximately how many people were at the event?	If you gave a speech, what was it about? (Ex: General Information, Thank You, Personal Story)
If you did not give a speech, what was your involvement (Ex: Greet guests, photo op, thank individuals, help with event)	Comments:



Athlete Leader Contract

By signing below, each **Athlete Leader** agrees to the following:

1. Follow the Special Olympics Code of Conduct, and practice respect, courtesy, and good sportsmanship.
2. I am an athlete in good standing, and currently train and compete in at least one sport.
3. Recognize that as an Athlete Leader, I am a representative of Special Olympics at all levels at all times.
4. Will take as many courses as possible to help me grow as an athlete leader depending on my interest and ability.
5. Attend scheduled Athlete Leadership meetings (any type) as needed. I will let my Mentor know if I have transportation challenges
6. Read over meeting materials with my Mentor ahead of time so that I will be able to offer my comments and suggestions.
7. Work with my Mentor ~ ask him or her questions if I do not understand something and offer my suggestions that might improve the Special Olympics athlete experience.

Athlete name (printed)

Subprogram/Program Name

Athlete signature

Witness – Mentor name

Date of Commitment



Mentor Contract

By signing below, each **mentor** agrees to the following:

1. I am a Class A Volunteer in good standing and at least 18 years of age.
2. I will always help my athlete leader develop and express **his or her** opinions. When serving as a Mentor, I will **never** push my opinion on an athlete leader. Doing so will often cause the athlete to adapt your view and not express theirs. Value your Athlete Leader's opinions and preferences.
3. Be encouraging and supportive. Make sure you respect athletes as equal partners in your Special Olympics experience.
4. Listen to your athlete, both during experiential activities and at meetings. Should your athlete have questions or need direction take the time to understand what your athletes is asking.
5. Mentors should work with parents, guardians, or programs serving persons with intellectual disabilities to explain what Athlete Leadership is, and help the others understand the significance of the program to the athlete.
6. The Mentor should be an advocate for the athlete, making sure the athlete leader experiences meaningful positions of influence and leadership.
7. Remember that you are **not** the group leader in meeting.
8. Be willing to help the athlete stay on task while attending events or meetings, but understand that it is the athlete's responsibility to speak for themselves.
9. Ensure that the athlete understands the minutes or after action to do lists and is prepared for any questions or discussion that may arise from the minutes.
10. Attend classes with your athlete and participate in the appropriate training opportunities throughout the year. Work on a one-on-one relationship with your athlete during each course and during the required practical experience.
11. Ensure that your athlete arranges transportation to and from classes, meetings or activities. Assist as needed.
12. If I am a parent, I am serving as a mentor on a trial basis as my athlete might prefer to have a mentor but we have not found one for him or her.

Mentor name (printed)

Subprogram/Program Name

Mentor signature

Athlete name

Dates of Commitment



Athlete Leadership Conference Feedback

Please complete this Evaluation Form and return to the instructors by the end of the class. We value your opinions and want to make continuous improvements.

Name: _____ **Level:** _____ Beginner _____ Advanced

Please check (X) Athlete _____ Mentor _____

Name 2 things YOU learned that is going to help you when you speak to a group.

1.

2.

Describe the section of this course you liked best. _____
And explain why you liked it.

Identify which part of the course didn't work for you. _____
Suggest why it may not have worked.

Explain how you would improve this course when we offer it in the future?

What was your favorite experience/exercise in the Athlete Leadership course?