Introduction to Athlete Leadership

Participant Guide

2019
With proper training, our athletes can be involved and contribute in meaningful ways at all levels.
### Existing Athlete Leadership Roles

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Roles for Athletes

**Athlete Input Council Member** — You can improve your local Program and Special Olympics Ohio by making suggestions and discussing problems. Find out if your local program has an Athlete Input Council and become a participating member! If your local program doesn’t have an AIC, talk to your local coordinator about starting one.

**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.

**Athletes as Coaches** — You can become a coach or assistant coach! You will need to make a commitment to become certified and take all of the required courses.

**Athletes as Officials** — You can become an official if that is your dream! Special Olympics will provide athletes information so they can participate in National Governing Body certification programs as an official or other skilled sport personnel.

**Athletes on Program Committees or Board of Directors** — You can become a representative of athletes on these very important groups. Athletes can receive additional training to serve on committees and boards.

**Athletes in the Media** — You can get the Special Olympics word out. You can write articles, do television or radio shows, or work with the newspapers.

**Athletes on Games/Program Management Teams** — You can be a valuable asset on a Special Olympics Games management team or committee. Some athletes are filling important roles by helping the state office conduct the games that you compete in. Talk to your local program about ways to help.
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Roles for Athletes

**Athletes as Special Olympics Employees** — Someday you might be employed by Special Olympics. Several states, Accredited Programs and the international office have athletes on their payroll as regular employees.

**Athlete Congress Member** — The Athlete Congress exists in several 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. Become an active AIC member to be eligible to serve on a congress.

**Athletes as Volunteers** — Some of you have already done this, maybe without realizing it. You may have helped with games, raffles, or runs in the past. You can volunteer for fundraising events, state level competitions, and local/regional competitions!

**Athletes as Mentors or Advocates** — You can help fellow athlete leaders by being their helper at Athlete Leadership Program University or advocating for their rights when they are having sports or leadership problems.

**Athletes as Course Instructors** — You can teach upcoming Athlete Leadership courses like the one you’re taking today! Reach out to your trainers if you are interested.

**Athletes as Fundraisers** — You can help raise money for fundraising events like the Plane Pull or Polar Plunge. You can also help plan and run fundraising opportunities for your local program.
Athlete Leadership in Action!

Communications

☐ Speaking to clubs, government, schools, sports organizations, sponsors, potential sponsors, Torch Run, businesses
☐ Serving as an Emcee, hosting Opening Ceremonies, speaking at sporting events
☐ Interviews (Newspaper; TV)
☐ Newsletter articles
☐ Website
☐ Radio
☐ Your idea_____________________________________

Sports

☐ Team manager
☐ Equipment managers
☐ Games helper
☐ Assistant coach
☐ Coach
☐ Official
☐ Scorer
☐ Timer
☐ Your idea_____________________________________

Volunteering

☐ Helping to organize Opening Ceremonies
☐ Volunteering at sporting events
☐ Sponsor recognition events
☐ Assisting with awards
☐ Athlete Instructor for Athlete Leadership & General Orientations
☐ Young Athletes (YAP) Play Pals
☐ Your idea_____________________________________


Help Lead the Program (Governance)

- Member of committee
- Member of management team
- Member of Athlete Input Council
- Member of a group of athletes who give informal suggestions
- Board of Directors Member
- Change of Policy or the way Program does business; samples of what has already been implemented in various Programs’ Athlete Congresses include the following:
  - Athletes helped choose code of conduct.
  - Athletes chose own uniform style.
  - Athletes voted on new sports.
  - Athlete helped choose Healthy menu options for Games.
- Your idea__________________________________

Fundraising

- Polar Plunge
- Plane Pull
- Law Enforcement Torch Run
- Walk-A-Thons
- Car washes
- Dinners; Breakfasts
- Can drives
- Bake sales
- Donations
- Sponsor an Athlete
- Grocery store promotions/Torch Icons
- Your idea__________________________________
Sample Athlete Congress Issues from a Special Olympics US State Program

- **Issue #1:** Codes of Conduct and Dating Policy for athletes and coaches must be reviewed by coaches with athletes at the beginning of each season, by persons conducting the general orientations (for all attendees), by Local Program Coordinators with games management teams prior to each competition, and by Local Program with local management team members once a year.
  **Voting Results:** 27 Yes 1 No 0 Abstain

- **Issue #2:** Wristbands must be replaced with photo identification at Program-level competitions.
  **Voting Results:** 14 Yes 15 No 0 Abstain

- **Issue #3:** Special Olympics Inc. General Rules’ Smoking and Tobacco Policy must be extended in state to include all Program non-competitive events.
  **Voting Results:** 17 Yes 9 No 2 Abstain

- **Issue #4:** Special Olympics state must have permanent sports symbols or identification on all medals and ribbons.
  **Voting Results:** 16 Yes 12 No 0 Abstain

- **Issue #5:** All Local Programs must provide each athlete attending a Program-level competition shirt or jacket printed with the name of the Local Program or Special Olympics logo. It must be worn during non-competitive activities at Games or tournaments and be collected by the Local Program after each competition.
  **Voting Results:** 8 Yes 18 No 2 Abstain

**Issues 1, 3, & 4 must be recognized by the Board of Directors as motions for review and vote.**

- **Issue #1:** Each Local Program must have an Athlete Leader on their Management Team or a Committee of Importance.
  **Vote Results:** 20 Yes 0 No 0 Abstain

- **Issue #2:** All Divisions at Program-level Games (1-4 or 1-5 depending on the team sport) must have an A and B Division.
  **Vote Results:** 2 Yes 17 No 1 Abstain

- **Issue #3:** Each Local Program must have a Global Messenger who has attended a Program-level Workshop using a trainer, trained by Special Olympics.
  **Vote Results:** 19 Yes 0 No 1 Abstain

- **Issue #4:** Program Games Management Teams must provide food alternatives for people with food allergies (specifically gluten, lactose and nuts).
  **Vote Results:** 10 Yes 7 No 3 Abstain

- **Issue #5:** Special Olympics should offer a moment of silence at every Program-level competition to honor those athletes, coaches and volunteers who have passed away since the last competition.
  **Vote Results:** 17 Yes 3 No 0 Abstain

**Issues 1, 3, & 5 must be recognized by the Board of Directors as motions presented for review/vote.**
Athlete Leader Contract

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

1. Be able to explain the Special Olympics mission, uniqueness from other sport organizations, divisioning, purpose and basic concepts of Athlete Leadership.

2. Follow the Special Olympics Code of Conduct, and practice respect, courtesy, and good sportsmanship of Special Olympics at the local, area, and state levels.

3. Represent Special Olympics in a professional manner at local, area and state levels.

4. Be an athlete at least 16 years of age in good standing and currently train and compete in at least one sport.

5. Be a role model for other athletes.

6. Take as many Athlete Leadership courses as possible and, when possible or available, strive to obtain a degree in one of the three major subject areas ~ Communications, Sports, or Governance.

7. When you take an Athlete Leadership course, study material with mentor.

8. Attend scheduled Athlete Leadership meetings (local, area, state) and arrange transportation.

9. Be prepared; read all materials prior to meetings, enabling informed comments and suggestions.

10. Offer suggestions for improvement about activities or meetings in which participate.

11. Work with your mentor to be the best you can be.

12. Always follow through with anything you start.

13. Commit to Athlete Leadership for a minimum of two years.

14. Help recruit mentors, facilitators and athletes for Program.

__________________________________________  ______________________________________
Athlete name (printed)                          Program Name

__________________________________________  ______________________________________
Athlete signature                               Witness – Mentor name

__________________________________________
Dates 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 adopt 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 athlete 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 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.

13. Agree to a two-year commitment to partner with your Athlete Leader to make their Athlete Leadership experience as meaningful and educational as possible.

Mentor name (printed)  Subprogram/Program Name

Mentor signature  Athlete name

Dates of Commitment
Uniqueness from Other Sports Organizations

Special Olympics is more similar than different from other sports organizations. However, it is important to identify the five areas that make Special Olympics unique. Per Official Special Olympics General Rules:

1. A variety of sports opportunities are provided for all ability levels. For example: In track and field, we have athletes that are in wheelchair events or may walk 10 meters through athletes who are running half or full marathons. In basketball we offer individual skills, traditional teams, and unified teams.

2. Ability groupings are created through a process called divisioning. The goal is to provide fair and equitable competition (evenness) for all athletes within each ability grouping (division). One of the founding principles is that we provide an opportunity for every athlete, not to win but to excel, in competition. The games organizing committee goes through a process of evaluating their skills as well as their game play to determine the most appropriate division.

3. Awards are provided to all participants who compete. The award itself is based on participation and place of finish within each division. Even if an athlete starts but cannot finish the competition, that athlete receives a participation award.

4. The established criteria for athlete advancement to higher levels of competition is based on order of finish for each division and random draw. In most Programs you must compete in a local competition in order to be eligible to advance to the next level which could be an Area/Regional competition or a State or National, Regional, or World Competition. As a result of winning your state competition, you are eligible to attend a National, Regional, or World Games. SOI still enforces the Random Draw selection. Names are thrown in a hat from all Gold Medalists that attended the Program’s Games in that sport. Whoever’s name is selected may have the opportunity to attend the next level of competition if they meet all the requirements set by the Program.

5. Special Olympics does not charge a fee to athletes (or their families) to train or compete. Unlike the sport organizations, basketball leagues, clubs, etc., Eunice Kennedy Shriver wanted to ensure that all individuals would be able to join Special Olympics, not just the ones whose families could afford it. Everyone needs to help support the fundraising efforts in their Program so that in order for Special Olympics to continue. However, it does mean that athletes and their families should not be told they have to “pay to play”.
Divisioning

Special Olympics organizes its competition so that, whenever possible, athletes compete against others of similar ability. This process is called divisioning.

Ensuring fair divisioning of athletes for competition is one of the primary duties of the competition management team. The following criteria shall determine how Special Olympics athletes are assigned to competition divisions at Special Olympics competitions. Where exceptions to these criteria are necessary, competition management will review proposed modifications to these criteria and make a final decision based on the goal of providing the most dignified and challenging competition experience for each athlete. The competition management has final authority concerning divisions and any variation from these criteria. Protests based on divisioning are not allowed.

Athletes or teams are divisioned (grouped) using the following basic procedure:

1. Divide by Gender: Male, Female or Combined (under some circumstances)

2. Divide by Age:

   - Individual Sports
     - 8-11
     - 12-15
     - 16-21
     - 22-29
     - 30 and over

   - Team Sports
     - 15 and under
     - 16-21
     - 22 and over
     - 30 and over

3. Divide by Ability:
   - Pre-competition information and scores are used to place individuals or teams into preliminary divisions.
   - On-site preliminary events (timed heats or team observations) are conducted to verify or modify divisions for the final competition.
   - In individual sports, the suggested guideline to determine a division is that the difference between the best time/score and the worst time/score within a final division should not vary by more than 15%.

4. Combining Groups:
   - Age groups and/or males and females may be combined if this achieves a closer matching of ability.
   - The minimum number of athletes or teams in a division is 3. The maximum is 8.

In many Accredited Programs, the numbers of participants are so low that divisioning becomes a tremendous challenge. In all instances, competition management personnel are charged with providing competition among those of equal abilities. Thus, ability is the overriding factor as long as there is no health or safety risk to athletes.
Getting to Know You *(For athlete to keep)*

Please list your greatest strengths:

1. 
2. 
3. 

Describe some of the happiest moments in YOUR life.

Identify the things that are the most important to YOU.

List 2 things you would like to learn.

1. 
2. 

List how you think you can contribute to Special Olympics (hint, look at pages 4-7 in this document).
My Special Olympics Personal Purpose Statement (Athlete)

On this date: Day __________ Month __________ Year __________

By ______________________________________

(Your name)

Please check (X) one of the following.

I want to concentrate my coursework in: Communication____ Governance ____ Sports____

Other: ____________________________________________________

(Please List)

**Athlete Copy**

Record your Special Olympics Purpose Statement. Your purpose statement is what you want to be and do with your life with regard to Special Olympics. Make sure it is specific. Your purpose statement will empower you to become the leader you want to be in Special Olympics!

Name 2 things YOU can do when you get home that will start you on the path to becoming an athlete leader.

1.

2.
My Special Olympics Personal Purpose Statement (Athlete)

On this date: Day __________ Month __________ Year __________

By __________________________________________
(Your name)

Please check (X) one of the following.

I want to concentrate my coursework in: Communication____ Governance ____ Sports____

Other: ______________________________________________________________
(Please List)

Program Copy

Record your Special Olympics Purpose Statement. Your purpose statement is what you want to be and do with your life with regard to Special Olympics. Make sure it is specific. Your purpose statement will empower you to become the leader you want to be in Special Olympics!

Name 2 things YOU can do when you get home that will start you on the path to becoming an athlete leader.

1. 

2. 
My Special Olympics Personal Purpose Statement (Mentor)

On this date: Day __________ Month __________ Year __________

By __________________________ and __________________________
(Your name) (Athlete Leader)

Program Copy
My Special Olympics Personal Purpose Statement (Mentor)

On this date: Day __________ Month __________ Year __________

By ________________________________ and ________________________________

(Your name) (Athlete Leader)

Mentor Copy
Practicum Form

To receive credit for courses attended; this form must be completed and returned by the deadline.

Must be returned to Program office by email mmodene@sooh.org or fax (614)239-1873 by_______

Athlete name ___________________________ Phone ___________________________
Address _______________________________ E-mail ___________________________

Mentor name_____________________________ Phone ___________________________
Address _______________________________ E-mail ___________________________
Name of Program you represent ________________________________

Certification requirements for the Introduction to Athlete Leadership Course:
Date of Course: ___________ Instructors: _______________________________________

1. Completed 10 Volunteer Service hours
   Date ______ Hours ____ Job ______________ Date ______ Hours ____ Job ______________
   Date ______ Hours ____ Job ______________ Date ______ Hours ____ Job ______________
   Date ______ Hours ____ Job ______________ Date ______ Hours ____ Job ______________
   Date ______ Hours ____ Job ______________ Date ______ Hours ____ Job ______________
   Date ______ Hours ____ Job ______________ Date ______ Hours ____ Job ______________
   Date ______ Hours ____ Job ______________ Date ______ Hours ____ Job ______________

2. Completed a General Orientation
   Date: ___________ Online? Yes or No

3. Attach a copy of the Class A Volunteer Form for Athlete

4. Completed Protective Behaviors
   Date: ___________

5. Feedback:
   What are some of the things you learned from your practicum experiences? __________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
(Signature of Athlete) (Date) (Signature of Mentor) (Date)

Athlete Leader Coordinator Signature (Date) Athlete Leader Coordinator (Print) (Date)
Course Evaluation

We value your opinions and want to make continuous improvements.

Name: _______________________________   Program: ____________________________

Please identify who is completing form: Athlete _____   Mentor ____

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

Explain how you would improve this course:

What questions do you still have about this course or Athlete Leadership in General?

Any other feedback: