



# Volunteer Handbook

**Special Olympics**  
Utah



## Letter from Amy

You are about to embark on a challenge that will bring you into contact with some very talented athletes. These athletes train year-round for the opportunity to compete in Olympic-type sports.

These are the athletes within Special Olympics Utah. Volunteers are key to the success of Special Olympics athletes. Whether your volunteer responsibility is to coach, raise funds, provide medical assistance, distribute lunches or perform any number of other volunteer jobs, we could not conduct quality athlete training or competition without you.

Your commitment to the wellbeing of Special Olympics athletes is evidenced by your participation in this volunteer orientation. You have come forward to accept the challenge to make the lives of our athletes better through sports. Whether at a one-day event or with a year round program, the contributions you make will affect the lives of our athletes for years to come.

Thank you for your commitment to the athletes of Special Olympics Utah.

Sincerely,

Amy Hansen  
CEO  
Special Olympics Utah

## Mission

The mission of Special Olympics Utah is 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 a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.

## Special Olympics Athlete's Oath

**"Let me win; but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."**

## Our History

The global Special Olympics movement got its start on 20 July 1968, when the first International Special Olympics Games were held at Soldier Field, Chicago, Illinois, USA. But the concept of Special Olympics was born much earlier, when Eunice Kennedy Shriver started a day camp for people with intellectual disabilities at her home in 1962.

Today, more than 2.25 million Special Olympics athletes participate worldwide in more than 200 programs in over 160 countries. Special Olympics is officially recognized by the United States Olympic Committee and the International Olympic Committee.

## Today's Facts

- Special Olympics is the #1 program in the world to get the father of a child with an intellectual disability more active in the child's life.
- At age 22 when individuals with disabilities are forced to leave school programs, there is nothing to keep them involved in physical fitness and recreation programs. Special Olympics can become a huge part of their social life.
- Statistics from a Yale University study states that 52% of people with intellectual disabilities involved with Special Olympics are getting and holding jobs, while only 10% of that population NOT involved with Special Olympics have jobs.
- Special Olympics has the proven training materials and the ability to train staff and volunteers on how to organize Special Olympics activities which is a universal event management skill, lifetime learning, etc.

## Volunteer Descriptions

Category	Description	Commitment
<b>Coaching</b>	Work directly with athletes to improve their skills in specific Special Olympics sports. We offer 17 Olympic-type sports.	Participation is seasonal for each sport. The usual commitment is two hours per week for a minimum of eight weeks.
<b>Competitions</b>	Perform short-term tasks associated with competitions (i.e. scorekeeping, staging/escorting athletes, serving meals, presenting awards, score running, timing, fans in the stands, etc.	Four-hour shifts +, one or more days each year.
<b>Medical</b>	Provide basics first aid at competitions. Please note that this category requires medical training and certification.	Four to eight-hour shifts one or more days a year.
<b>Healthy Athletes</b>	Assist in Clinical Directors with screenings in Opening Eyes (vision), Special Smiles (dental), Healthy Hearing (hearing), Fit Feet (podiatry), Fun Fitness (physical fitness).	Time commitment is based on your level of involvement. Generally two or three times per year at state competitions for one to two days for Clinical Directors, residents or students.
<b>Team Volunteers</b>	Assist coaches during practice.	Participation is seasonal for each sport. The usual commitment is two hours per week for a minimum of eight weeks.

## Protective Behaviors

### Actions Special Olympics Utah has taken to protect athletes:

- Protective Behavior's training
- Volunteer screening requirements in the US
- Code of Conduct for athletes and coaches

### Inappropriate Behavior

Inappropriate gifts, trips, outings, or other gestures of affection from a volunteer include:

- Invitations for sleepovers at a volunteer's house;
- Invitations to parties at a volunteer's house where parents or care providers are not included;
- Excessive displays of interest in a particular athlete or group of athletes (such as all male athletes or only athletes under the age of 13);

### Emotional Abuse

- Profanity is never allowed
- Treat athletes with respect and provide encouragement
- Do not allow demeaning nicknames even among teammates
- Discipline should be part of a meaningful behavior modification strategy and never acted on in anger

### Physical Abuse

- Corporal punishment is never allowed no matter who says it is OK
- Withholding food or water is maltreatment and strictly prohibited
- Only give prescribed medications in accordance with state regulations (consult your Special Olympics Program office for those regulations)
- Be aware of athlete sensitivity to temperature, sound and touch

## Volunteer Code of Conduct

As a Special Olympic volunteer, I agree that while serving as a volunteer, I will:

- Demonstrate a positive and constructive attitude toward Special Olympics competition, the athletes, coaches, officials, and fans.
- Provide for the general welfare, health and safety of all Special Olympics Utah athletes and volunteers.
- Dress and act in an appropriate manner at all times.
- Follow the established rules and guidelines of Special Olympics and/or any agency involved with Special Olympics.
- Report any emergencies to the appropriate authorities after first taking immediate action to ensure the health and safety of the participants.
- Abstain from the consumption or use of all alcohol, tobacco products and illegal substances while involved with any Special Olympics Utah event, competition or training school.
- Not engage in any inappropriate contact or relationship with athletes, volunteers or other participants of Special Olympics Utah.

## Volunteer Guidelines

As a volunteer in any capacity, you represent SOUT to the participants, the families, the general public and the media. No matter what your volunteer assignment, it is critical that you conduct yourself in a professional manner. If your job requires a credential or identification badge, be sure to wear it all times.

Talk to the athletes as you would anyone else. Ask them to repeat themselves if necessary and maintain eye contact. Those competing in sports and attending events are referred to as "ATHLETES" at all times.

Encourage appropriate behavior. Behavior not appropriate among persons without disabilities is not appropriate among persons with disabilities.

Some athletes enjoy hugs while others do not. Take your cue from them and set your own comfort zone. All participation deserves recognition regardless of place or finish.

Please do not try to "train" or "coach" the athletes. They have been working with their coaches for weeks for this event and are looking to them for guidance.

There is a chance Special Olympics Utah will be taking photographs and video recordings of today's events. By signing in for your shift, you authorize Special Olympics Utah to use your image and likeness in promotional materials.

## Volunteer Terminology

- Do not use the word "the" in front of Special Olympics unless describing a specific Olympics event or competition.
- Avoid the use of phrase "intellectually disabled". Refer to Athletes as people with intellectual disabilities.
- Refer to the Athletes as "Athletes" OR as "Special Olympic Athletes". We cannot use the term "Special Olympians".
- Avoid using the terms "kids" to prefer to athletes. Adult athletes are an integral part of the programs and events.

## Contact Information

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