Coach Education Program

Online *Softball* Sport Certification
Coach Education Program

*If you have not already done so, please complete the following Class A Certification Process at: http://soky.org/coachcertification/ prior to completing this Sport Certification Training

- Become a Class A Volunteer
- Complete and Submit Class “A” Volunteer Application. *Required every three years*
- Complete the online Volunteer Orientation Training and submit its quiz. *Only required once during continued involvement with SOKY*
- Complete the online Special Olympics International Protective Behaviors course. *Required every three years for those over the age of 18*
- Complete the online CDC’s “Heads Up” Concussion Training for SOKY and submit its quiz. *Required every three years for those over the age of 18*
Softball Sport Certification

• This training will cover Special Olympics Kentucky softball events, rules, competitions, the divisioning and registration process, along with any additional softball resources and other general information.

• The online Softball Sport Certification training is required for SOKY coaches who like to become sport certified and is part of the criteria to be eligible to attend both USA and World Games. The training is also for those coaches and/or volunteers that would just like to learn more information about Special Olympics Kentucky as a whole and specifically its Softball program.
Coaching Special Olympics Athletes prepares Special Olympics coaches to use their sport-specific knowledge in coaching athletes with intellectual disabilities. This course meets the Special Olympics standards and competencies for coach certification. For veteran Special Olympics coaches, this course serves as a reminder of the essentials sometimes forgotten after years of coaching. For new Special Olympics coaches, this course will help prepare you for your first role in coaching Special Olympics athletes.
Coaching Special Olympics
Athletes

The better the coach ... the better the experiences ... the better the athlete!
I COACH BECAUSE...

Please take a minute to watch this “I Coach Because Clip” created by Special Olympics New Jersey

I COACH BECAUSE VIDEO
Course Overview

Unit 1: The Athlete
Unit 2: Teaching & Training
Unit 3: Preparing & Coaching During Competition
Unit 4: Managing the Program
Unit 5: Additional Coach Information
Unit 6: SOKY Softball Specifics
Unit 1 – The Athlete

Overview

• Psychological Issues (Learning)
• Medical Issues
• Social Issues
Motivation – helping athletes maintain interest

• May have shorter attention span; harder to keep independently “on task”.
• May be motivated more by short-term rather than long-term goals.
• May learn better with more frequent positive reinforcement

Perception – helping athletes understand the sport in which they are participating

• May have difficulty focusing attention on the appropriate object or task
• May have impairments in sight or hearing
Unit 1 – Psychological Issues & Considerations

**Comprehension**—helping athletes remember and preform the skill they have learned (understanding)

- May find it difficult to understand verbal explanations of new skills. Often find it easier to learn through visual demonstrations and physical prompts.
- May have difficulty in understanding complex, multi-part actions or explanations.
- Often take a longer time between learning one piece of information and the next (learning plateau).
- Less able to generalize skills learned in one situation to a different situation.

**Memory**

- May need frequent repetition and reminders in order to remember concept or skill.
## Unit 1 – Psychological Challenges

*Each psychological item has it’s challenge and action:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Item</th>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>Easily distracted by noise</td>
<td>Control surroundings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>History of neglect &amp; negative reinforcement, feeling of failure</td>
<td>Focus on positive, appropriate reinforcement, catch the athlete doing well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory</td>
<td>Difficulty applying skills in different environments</td>
<td>Practice in different settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Difficulty learning through verbal explanation only</td>
<td>Add demonstrations and/or physical manipulation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Down Syndrome

- Approximately 10% of individuals with Down Syndrome have a condition called atlanto-axial instability, which is a mal-alignment of the cervical vertebrae C-1 and C-2 in the neck. This condition may cause possible injury if they participate in activities that hyper-extend or radically flex the neck or upper spine.
- Prohibited sports – equestrian, gymnastics, diving, pentathlon, butterfly and dive starts in swimming, high jump, alpine/snowboarding, squat lift and soccer.

Medications

- Understand the physical side effects of an athlete’s medication
- Very important to know the medications athletes are taking
Unit 1 – Medical Considerations

Seizures
• Incidence tends to be higher with Special Olympics athletes
• Athlete safety to minimize the adverse effects of a seizure

Physical Disabilities
• Some athletes also have physical disabilities which may affect the sports they can participate in or the methods of teaching a coach must use. Special Olympics has events for individuals who use wheelchairs, walkers or other assistance. *SOFTBALL IS A NON-ASSISTED SPORT*
• Muscle strength may be needed for particular sports and some athletes may not have the strength for those sports. This is often due to lack of use rather than a permanent disability.
Unit 1 – Medical Considerations

**Autism**
- 20% of athletes exhibit one or more of the autism spectrum disorders
- Over stimulate

**Fetal Alcohol Syndrome**
- These athletes consistently function better on performance tasks compared with verbal tasks. The more concrete the task, the better the performance.
- Tend to have more verbal comprehension skills, despite being comfortable and chatty around people. These athletes will also tend to have attention and memory deficits and often display poor judgement in distinguishing right from wrong.
# Unit 1 – Medical Considerations for each action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>See the challenge that correlates with the appropriate action.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Down Syndrome</td>
<td>Ensure the athlete is screened for atlanto-axial instability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Seizures</td>
<td>Be prepared to protect the athlete and minimize adverse affects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Autism spectrum disorders</td>
<td>Control and/or block self-stimulatory behavior and set up a behavior support plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Attention deficit/hyperactivity</td>
<td>Shorten drills and provide one-to-one assistance when needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Fetal alcohol syndrome</td>
<td>Provide concrete performance tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unit 1 – Social Considerations

**Social Skills**
- May lack basic social/adaptive skills due to a lack of opportunity or training
- May also lack communication skills and positive interaction with others

**Recreation at Home**
- Lack of physical activity
- Lack of encouragement

**Economic Status**
- May lack financial means
- May not have access to independent transportation
Unit 1 – Social Considerations

All of the following social consideration(s) may impact an athlete’s participation in Special Olympics:

• Inappropriate responses to social situations
• Physical inactivity being modeled
• Lack of endurance
• Lack of access to transportation

Our challenge as coaches is to develop a full understanding of our athletes and the strengths and weaknesses they bring with them to a Special Olympics program. By doing so we can begin to develop a training and competition program that they will benefit from and enjoy.
Unit 2 – Teaching & Training the Athlete
There are many ways to organize a training session for Special Olympics athletes. Because of some of the things previously identified concerning comprehension and memory, there is considerable value in developing a consistent training routine that provides familiarity, stability, and comfort.
## Unit 2 – Organizing a Training Session

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component and Details</th>
<th>Layout of Drill or Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warm-up &amp; Stretching</td>
<td>Specific to the sport, repetitive and involve athletes in leading activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills Construction</td>
<td>Break skills into smaller tasks, involve many athletes at a time and practice skills related to event situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition Experience</td>
<td>Scrimmage, simulate event/game situations and work towards what the competition will look like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool-Down, Stretch, &amp; Reward</td>
<td>Playing a game related to the sport (i.e. – Pepper for softball) and end each training with a cool down activity (Video of Pepper game)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unit 2 – Organizing a Training Session: Warm-Up

**Warm-Up**

- A warm-up should be the first physical activity in every training session or competition. It helps prepare the body and mind for the activity we are about to do. Warm-ups should begin at a slow pace and gradually become a little faster and more difficult.

- A warm-up helps us to reach a state of physical and mental readiness. When we prepare both the body and the mind, we are less likely to suffer an injury and will perform better at each practice, training and competition.
Physical Benefits: A warm-up prepares the body for sport or exercise and helps to prevent injury by:
- Increasing heart rate
- Increasing breathing rate
- Increasing blood flow to the active muscles
- Increasing body and muscle temperature

Mental Benefits: Warm-ups prepare the mind to focus on the sport or exercise by:
- Helping athletes shift focus from life to sport
- Mentally reviewing skills previously learned
- Connecting the mind and the body (linking hand and eye coordination)
- Every sport is different and each sport has specific skills and movements. The warm-up should be personalized to the sport and the ability levels of all of the athletes.

- However there are some general components that should be included in all warm-ups regardless of the sport in which includes the following:

  • Aerobic activity to raise heart rate
  • Dynamic stretches
  • Sport specific movements
Unit 2 – Organizing a Training Session: Warm-Up – Aerobic Activity

- Aerobic activities are whole body movements that will increase the heart rate that may include:
  - Walk or jog around the field or court for five minutes
  - Team Dance
  - Team Game (i.e. – tag or sport specific game)
  - Build an obstacle course using the equipment and space you have for practice

- Aerobic activities should start at a slow pace and gradually increase in intensity/difficulty and last at least five minutes.
Unit 2 – Organizing a Training Session: Warm-Up – Dynamic Stretches

- Now that the body is warm it is time to focus on stretching the muscles you will use during your sport.
- Dynamic stretches consist of active, controlled movements that take body parts through a full range of motion.
- Sport specific dynamic stretches include:
  - Sprints
  - Agility drills
  - Balance drills
- General dynamic stretches include:
  - High knees
  - Butt kicks
  - Leg swings
  - Torso twists
  - Side stepping
  - Arm circles
When your training, practice or sport session is complete you should always cool down. It is as important to have a good cool-down as it is to have a good warm-up. A good cool-down allows the body to gradually return to a state of rest.

There are many purposes of a cool-down including:

- Decrease heart rate
- Decrease breathing rate
- Decrease body and muscle temperature
- Decrease muscle soreness
- Improve flexibility
- Promote relaxation
Unit 2 – Organizing a Training Session: Cool-Down (Cont.)

**Cool-Down**

- The cool-down is also a great chance for coaches to review the session, to tell athletes what to expect at the next session, and to ask for feedback from athletes. Remind your athletes they need to drink water and have a healthy snack to help recover from practice. The [FIT 5 GUIDE](#) has suggestions for healthy snacks and recommendations for proper hydration.

- Cool-down activities may include: static stretching, controlled breathing intervals and some light aerobic activity.
The key is to break down skills into small tasks or steps; tasks are then put together to form skills. Use drills and activities that involve many athletes at all times. Practice skills in situations that are related to the game or event. Break skills down into small steps.

Task → Skill → Application → Competition
# Unit 2 – Training Sequence
What’s the challenge and how to fix it?

| Training Sequence Element | Challenge                                                                 | Action                                                                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|                                                                       |
| Application                 | Acquire ability to repeatedly demonstrate sport competencies in different situations & environments | Provide game like drills or situations                                 |
| Skills                     | Acquire ability to perform series of sport competencies effectively and necessary to perform a sport | Work on essential sport competencies to perform the sport             |
| Competition                 | Acquire ability to put essential sport competencies into practice         | Provide scrimmage opportunities in practice                           |
| Tasks                      | Acquire ability to perform essential sport competencies                   | Break essential sport competencies down into individual parts         |
Communication is key to immediately reinforcing desired behavior. There are several key words that begin with a “C” which address what a coach should say:

- CONCISE
- CONSISTENT
- CLEAR
- COMMAND-ORIENTED
- CONCRETE
## Unit 2 – Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sport Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Concise                | Use a few key words that cue a desired action  | “Go to the free throw line”  
Showing an athlete where to stand on defense |
| Consistent             | Use the same word or phrase for the same action| Coach constantly say “Breathe” – teaching an athlete when to take a breath in swimming |
| Clear                  | Use easy to understand words that have one meaning | “Swing the bat” teaching how/when to swing.                                   |
| Command-Oriented       | Use words that elicit or reinforce a desired action | “On your mark. Set. Go.” Using this phrase for starts in athletics.           |
| Concrete               | Connect words to something defined or tangible | “Jump forward” when coaching an athlete in the long jump.                     |
Unit 2 – Levels of Assistance or Instruction

- It is important to use the appropriate level of instruction and assistance.
  • A lower ability athlete may require more assistance
  • Verbal cues should always be accompanied by demonstration
  • Partial physical assistance may be needed to properly position the athlete
  • When all else fails take the athlete through the complete motion
## Unit 2 – Levels of Assistance or Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Instruction or Assistance</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sport Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full Physical Assistance</strong></td>
<td>Help the athlete through the entire motion of the skill</td>
<td>Softball: coach makes an adjustment to the athlete’s arm motion when throwing the ball by moving the athlete’s arm through the entire throwing movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbal</strong></td>
<td>Tell the athlete what to do</td>
<td>Footwork: “run forward to the line; then return, running backward”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demonstration</strong></td>
<td>Show the athlete the proper technique</td>
<td>Soccer: one athlete shoots on goal while another watches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partial Physical Assistance</strong></td>
<td>Place the athlete’s hands in the proper position</td>
<td>Golf: coach physically adjusts the athlete’s hands on the golf club with the correct grip</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- The goal is for coaches to meet each athlete where he/she is and treat him/her accordingly.

- However, a coach may often have certain expectations of an athlete that may not be realistic ... not because the coach does not care, but because the coach does not understand or appreciate the differences that may exist.

- When an athlete exhibits what is generally perceived as inappropriate behavior, the inappropriate behavior may not be defiance, acting out or silliness. These behaviors may simply be a reflection or part of the person and/or what is operating in the moment.
# Unit 2 – Managing Athlete Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Athlete Behavior Characteristics</th>
<th>Strategies to Improve Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Swimmer has a short attention span** | 1. Dwell on a stroke or activity for short periods of time; provide numerous activities focusing on same task  
2. Provide different opportunities for repetition and review, which is the key to gaining new skill.  
3. Work one-on-one to gain full attention. |
| **Basketball athlete yells if he/she misses a shot** | 1. Emphasize the other aspects of the game besides shooting  
2. Work on shooting drills without a hoop  
3. Begin to shoot at a hoop but in a non-game setting with a one-on-one coach |
| **Bowler doesn’t wait their turn** | 1. Have a coach at the lane help with the order of bowlers, explain whose turn it is  
2. Have the bowler wait with a coach behind the bowling area until their turn is up  
3. Emphasize the order and that the bowler will always follow the same individual |
Unit 3 – Preparing & Coaching for Competition

- A key goal of Special Olympics is to provide an opportunity for all athletes to experience success in competitions.

- A Special Olympics athlete can benefit from many aspects of a competition (including meeting new people, participating in the festivities of Opening Ceremonies and other social events, the excitement of traveling to new places and staying away from home, etc.). None of these things, however, should be as important to the coach as the focus on the participation in the competition itself.

- This section highlights ways to improve the quality of an athlete’s competition experience.
Unit 3 – Preparing for Competition

Registration and Key Pre-Season Items

- Provide accurate entry and team roster information, accurate qualifying times and scoresheets (Game Summary Forms), appropriate divisioning guidelines in which all are provided to SOKY State Office in a timely manner and by the requested due date.

- Help the specific Program Director prepare a successful competition for your athletes by meeting the registration deadlines and by turning in accurate and up to date information.

- As a coach, know and understand all of the rules in which can then be properly taught to your athletes

- Hold preseason meeting with athletes, coaches & family members to discuss expectations of the season – set the standard and any guidelines needed.
Unit 3 – Preparing for Competition (Cont.)

**Supervision**

- Discuss the challenges associated with participating in competition away from home, and why adequate, non-coaching additional support personnel are needed (other persons).
  - Transportation
  - Lodging (need for same-sex supervision) [SOKY Housing Policy](#)
  - Social activities
  - Coaches meetings (Who will supervise athletes during these?)
Unit 3 – Preparing for Competition (Cont.)

**Travel and Overnight**

- Discuss overnight concerns with parents or group-home supervisors
- Write up a simple checklist of items to bring and distribute to athletes and parents
- Make sure that all special medication needs are understood. Coaches may have to assist with handling medications. Have all medical forms and information readily available at all times.
- Work with most effective rooming arrangements, taking into account athlete choice, behavioral and personality clashes, etc.
Unit 3 – Competition-Day Coaching

Guidelines for Success

- Teach responsibility & independence: Assist athletes in dressing appropriately (proper uniform), understanding what is happening at competition site, maintaining a focused attitude and appropriate behavior

- Arrive Early: Allow time for putting on uniforms, warm-up and stretching routines and time to focus on the competition

Encourage maximum effort no matter your specific division or opponents throughout the entire competition!
Unit 3 – Competition-Day Coaching (Cont.)

**Guidelines for Success**

- *Help athletes learn from winning & losing*
  
  *Deal graciously and realistically with winning and losing. Focus on effort made, recognize accomplishments and new skills that were performed and taking something positive away from the experience.*

- *Let athletes compete without direct supervision (depending on ability or division)*
  
  *Not running down the side of the track shouting instructions, allowing the competition officials to conduct the competition and allowing athletes to make mistakes and helping them learn from their mistakes.*

**IF YOU MUST PROTEST A RESULT OR OUTCOME OF AN EVENT, PLEASE DO SO IN A CALM & RESPECTFUL MANNER!**
Unit 3 – Competition-Day Coaching (Cont.)

The coach can be the key person who makes any competition experience a good one.

*Please, take the time to adequately prepare for competition and plan for on-site supervision and make sure your time coaching is time well spent.
Unit 4 – Managing the Program

The successful Special Olympics Kentucky coach:

*Is sports and coaching knowledgeable:*

- Special Olympics Kentucky is a sport organization
- Technical knowledge of the sport and how to teach it is essential if coaches are to effectively help athletes improve their sport skills and truly benefit from Special Olympics.
- Successful coaches are constantly looking for opportunities to learn more about the sport.

*Is Special Olympics Kentucky knowledgeable:*

- Special Olympics Kentucky offered sports and modified rules to each sport
- Special Olympics Kentucky Mission Statement
- Special Olympics Kentucky Athlete and Coach Oath
- Special Olympics Kentucky Coaching Requirements (Coach Certification Process)

*A better understanding of these will benefit your athletes!*
The successful Special Olympics Kentucky coach (Cont.):

Recruits and trains assistant coaches:
- Individualized coach-athlete teaching is key to successful training in Special Olympics.
- Assistant coaches can be recruited to help provide individualized attention.
- Assistant coaches are useful only if they are trained and coordinated at practice.
- Invites fellow co-workers or friends out to see a game or a practice in hopes they will become involved.

Recruit and trains athletes:
- A coach is also a promoter and recruiter; always tries to expand participation
- Places athletes in correct division or ability level every season
- Puts a priority on safety
- Puts a priority on Health and Fitness & overall well-being of athletes
- Conducts high-quality training and competition
- Involves and educates families of participants
- Assists with community inclusion to improve social and communication skills of participants
Unit 4 – The Successful Special Olympics Coach (Cont.)

- Understands the proper and preferred method for wanting to communicate any feedback, suggestions, or complaints to the SOKY state office.
  - NONE OF THE LISTED ITEMS ABOVE SHOULD TAKE PLACE AT OR DURING AN EVENT
  - THE ITEMS ABOVE SHOULD BE ADDRESSED VIA EMAIL OR PHONE CALL BY THE HEAD COACH AND ONLY THAT PARTICULAR COACH (EMAILS SHOULD BE SHORT AND TO THE POINT)
  - THE HEAD COACH SHOULD FUNNEL ALL COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK FROM THE TEAM, PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, ETC. THROUGH THEM PRIOR TO BRINGING IT UP TO SOKY STATE OFFICE

We understand that every coach deserves to be heard, but in order to communicate most effectively, every coach should also understand the proper methods listed above!
A Positive Sport Experience Starts With The Coach

- Coaches have the greatest opportunity to create positive change in Special Olympics athletes, because they are the ones who work with athletes on a consistent basis. Good coaches know that learning to play a sport is more than just mastering skills associated with the sport – it takes teamwork, commitment, sacrifice, and dedication. These are qualities that Special Olympics coaches work to instill in their athletes, with the understanding that these lessons can have a positive impact on the athletes’ lives outside of sports. The second reason is that it is a requirement.

- You as a Special Olympics coach are role models and character builders. Coaches help our athletes discover their physical skills, their self-worth, their human courage, and their capacity to grow. Being a Special Olympics coach is one of the most important and rewarding volunteer roles.
Responsibilities of the Special Olympics Coach

• Assist athletes in learning sports skills and applying them in competitions.
• Encourage confidence and self-esteem through sport.
• Obtain equipment for athletic training.
• Help to recruit athletes and assistant coaches.
• Register athletes for competitions.
• Know and share the mission of Special Olympics in your community.
• Most importantly HAVE FUN!
Unit 5 – Additional Information: Coaches Corner (Cont.)

Coach Resources

- **Coach Code of Conduct:** Special Olympics Coaches are role models whose behavior should serve as a positive example for their athletes.
- **Athlete Code of Conduct:** Special Olympics Kentucky is committed to the highest ideals of sport and expects all athletes to honor sports and Special Olympics.
- **Family Member Code of Conduct:** This should be emphasized during training, competition, and special events at any level.
- **Volunteer Code of Conduct:** For SOKY volunteers.

[Links to Code of Conduct documents]
Key Coaching Forms

- **Accident/Incident Form:** [Online Version](#)
- **Certificate of Insurance:** [Online Version](#)
- **Athlete Medical Form:** [Online Version](#)
- **Class A Volunteer and Unified Partner App:** [Online Version](#)
- **Local Program Contact List:** [Online Version](#)
- **Special Olympics Logo Usage Guidelines:** [Online Version](#)

All can be found at the [SOKY COACHES CORNER](#)
Special Olympics Coach Oath – “In the name of all coaches, we shall follow written and verbal instructions of Special Olympics officials at all times, have our athletes at the appropriate events and activities at the proper time and abide by the rules and policies, in the spirit of sportsmanship.”
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

**Important General Information**

- **Main Point of Contact:** SOKY Director of Sports and Competition
- **Summer Sport:** Season runs from June – September
- **Season Timeline:**
  - Local/Area sign-ups/tryouts take place in May/June
  - First Packet of Information (registration packet) is sent out via email in early June
  - Local Leagues begin in early July and run for approximately 6-8 weeks (Georgetown League & Louisville Softball Leagues)
  - Three regional tournaments will take place in August:
    - Region 1 – Paducah, KY (One day event)
    - Region 2 – Georgetown, KY (Two day event)
    - Region 3 – Louisville, KY (Two day event)
      (Please refer to the regional team sports map to find your regional tournament)
  - State Tournament and Skills Competition held in mid-September (Three day event)

*SOKY SOFTBALL MANUAL*
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

Team Sports Regional Map

Special Olympics
Kentucky
ASA/USA SOFTBALL

• The National Governing Body of rules for SOKY Softball is Amateur Softball Association (ASA) in which is now known as ASA/USA Softball.

• Coaches are responsible for knowing and understanding the rules of the game through ASA/USA Softball Rules as well as SOKY’s modified/adaptive rules.

• ASA/USA Softball Rule Book can be found at: USA SOFTBALL or is available for download via smartphone app store.

   USA Softball App Download
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

**SOKY Softball Roster**

- As a coach you will potentially complete two roster forms throughout the course of the season: League Roster Form and Regional/State Roster Form.

- League Roster forms are only required of those teams competing in one of the offered SOKY sanctioned leagues. Regional/State rosters are required of every single team throughout the entire state.

- Minimum roster size is ten (10) athletes and the maximum roster size is twenty (20) athletes plus a maximum of six (6) coaches per team. One (1) of the six (6) coaches listed on the roster form, should be the official scorekeeper for the team.
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

**SOKY Softball Roster (Cont.)**

- The roster forms will also have two designated athlete team manager spots: This position is for those athletes who may not be able to physically play softball or are just looking to help the team out. *These athletes should also have an up to date medical on file.*

- Finally, the roster forms will have three “additional personnel” spots. If you wish to register additional people who help with your team do so here. Please note that these are additional chaperones such as bus drivers, assisted help, etc. *These individuals still need to be an approved SOKY Class A volunteer*
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

SOKY Softball Divisions

- There are four total SOKY Softball divisions in which include the following and are all co-ed divisions:

  • 3A Division (Highest Ability Level): ASA/USA Softball regulation rules
  • 2A Division: Adaptive rules & SOKY modifications
  • 1A Division: Adaptive rules & SOKY modifications
  • B Division (Lowest Ability Level): Adaptive rules & SOKY modifications

- Must be 8 years or older by the deadline submission date for the roster form in order to be able to compete!
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

B Division Criteria

B DIVISION
Most if not ALL players have little understanding of rules or team play.
LIMITED basic skills: hitting, running, fielding and throwing.

GUIDELINES:
Hitting – Majority of players struggle to make contact, ball is rarely hit beyond the infield
Running – Majority of players rely on verbal cues at most times
Fielding – Majority of players struggle to field the ball; Players wait until ball stops rolling before making a play
Throwing – Majority of players need verbal cues as to where to throw the ball and demonstrate LIMITED accuracy
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

1A Division Criteria

1A Division
Players have USEABLE, but some LIMITED concept of rules or team play.
Players have USEABLE, but some LIMITED skills: hitting, running, fielding and throwing.

Guidelines:
Hitting – Players have more consistency with making contact with the ball and will see more balls hit out of the infield. *1A players should NOT have the ability to consistently hit the ball hard enough to injure an infielder.

Running – Players rely on some verbal cues and have LIMITED base running skills.

Fielding – Players are able to field some balls and do not have to wait for the ball to stop rolling before doing so. Some success in catching fly balls as well.

Throwing – Players rely on some verbal cues as to where to throw the ball and demonstrate accuracy at times.
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

2A Division Criteria

2A DIVISION
Players have good, basic understanding of rules and team concept.
Players have CONSISTENT skills: hitting, running, fielding and throwing.

GUIDELINES:
Hitting – Players consistently makes good contact with the ball and understands the strike zone – Demonstrates the ability to hit the ball with more power.
Running – Players can initiate base running CONSISTENTLY without verbal cues and understand the skill of sliding.
Fielding – Players instinctively approaches a hit ball and CONSISTENTLY are able to field most balls on the ground and in the air.
Throwing – Players rely on few verbal cues as to where to throw the ball and demonstrate CONSISTENT accuracy.
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

Team Sport Divisioning Philosophy

• The divisioning process for team sports is much different, and much harder, than individual sports. Unlike most individual sports, team sports do not have concrete distances or times that can be used, although we do have teams submit game summary forms. Once a game starts, however, the information contained in the Game Summary Forms (GSFs) often takes a back seat to the dynamics at play minute-by-minute, play-by-play on the court or field.

• The challenge with divisioning team sports is that there are many factors that affect how a team performs on any given day — missing players, illness, penalties, behavior, coaching, who’s hot and who’s not, individual match ups, etc. With divisioning in team sports, much more emphasis is put on game results, common opponents, coach rankings and coach notes. There is not a perfect science to ensure that all divisions will have close games, which is why we use leagues/regionals as a divisioning process for team sports. We recognize there may be some games during a competition that are not competitive, but we hope that coaches will use this time to get the team better as a whole and play the back-up players.
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

**Softball Terminology**

**Ball** - When the pitched ball fails to cross the plate in the strike zone.

**Base** - One of four points, all of which must be touched in the proper order for a player to score a run.

**Batter’s Box** - The area on either side of home plate in which the batter must stand while batting.

**Diamond** - The playing area made up of the three bases and home plate.

**Double** - A two base hit. A ball hit which allows the batter to make it to second base without stopping.

**Extra Player** - An additional offensive player which gives a team 11 hitters but still only 10 defensive players.

**Fair Ball** - A ball which is hit on or between the foul lines.

**Foul Ball** - A ball which is hit outside the foul lines.
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

Softball Terminology (Cont.)

**Home Plate** - The base over which the strike zone is located, and the last base which must be touched in order to score a run.

**Home Run** - A four base hit. A ball hit which allows the batter to touch all the bases and score a run without stopping.

**Infielders** - The defensive players who are positioned on or near the bases.

**Line-up** - The order in which the offensive team bats.

**Out** - When a batter’s hit is caught, when the batter receives three strikes, or when a base runner is tagged or put out at a base.

**Outfielders** - The defensive players who are positioned behind the infielders.

**Single** - A one base hit. A ball hit which allows the batter to take first base only.
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

Softball Terminology (Cont.)

Strike - When a batter swings at and misses a pitched ball, allows a pitch to pass the plate in the strike zone without attempting to hit it, hits a foul ball or hits a foul tip.

Strike Zone - That space over any part of home plate between the batter highest (rear) shoulder and his knees when the batter assumes a natural batting stance.

Triple - A three base hit. A ball hit which allows the batter to make it to third base without stopping.

Batter-baserunner - Is a term to identify the batter, who in one way or another, has finished a turn at bat and is moving from home plate to first base.

Batter - refers only to the person at bat and does NOT describe the person running to first base.

Baserunner - You become a baserunner when you have reached first base without having been put out.
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

SOKY Softball Manual Overview

Sections 1-7

1. The Field
2. Equipment/Uniforms
3. Team/Rosters
4. The Game
5. Substitutions
6. Pitching Regulations
7. Batting Regulations
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

SOKY Softball Manual Overview:

Section 1 - The Field

• The softball diamond shall have 65 feet baselines (19.81m) for male divisions and 60 feet baselines (18.29m) for female divisions. The pitching distance will be 50 feet (14.02m) for both males and females. The pitching distance can be reduced to 40 feet (12.19m) for division 2A if necessary. In the 1A and B Division, the designated pitcher may stand where he/she feels they can best deliver a pitch to the current batter, but no closer than 20ft. from home plate.

• In the B and 1A divisions, the playing field will be shortened to approximately 200 feet. The actual field size will be determined by the space available at a particular venue. No homeruns in B division.

• A 16 ft. diameter circle around the pitcher's rubber will be added to the infield for the B and 1A divisions. This circle will serve as a boundary for the defensive pitcher. This player must remain in the circle until the batter has made contact with the ball.
SOKY Softball Manual Overview:
Section 2 – Equipment/Uniforms

- Per ASA/USA Softball rules, the use of any assisted equipment is not permitted while on the playing field if it imposes a potential safety hazard to any of the participants. (i.e. – wheelchairs, walkers, canes, etc.)
- The first baseman’s trapping glove may be worn by any player on the field.
- For ALL SOKY Softball Divisions all infielders should wear a protective facemask while on defense.
- The catcher must either wear a batter’s helmet or catcher’s helmet with a facemask, as well as a chest protector (shin guards are optional).
- All batters and baserunners must wear a batter’s helmet with a chin strap.
- Twelve-inch (12”) Yellow softballs shall be used for all divisions except the B division. The B division shall use the eleven-inch (11”) Yellow softballs. Per ASA/USA Softball rules, all balls must be .52 core.
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

SOKY Softball Manual Overview:
Section 2 – Equipment/Uniforms (Cont.)

• All players on a team should wear the same style and color shirts with numbers on the back for identification purposes. Numbers are not required on the front of the uniforms.
• Steel spikes are not allowed.
• Aluminum and/or wooden bats are used and must have “Official Softball” printed on them and they must have taped or rubber covered handles at least 6 inches and no more than 15 inches long. These bats must also not have any dents, dings or signs of excessive wear.
• Players will not be allowed to play in blue jean shorts or pants.
• The only acceptable headgear that can be worn by coaches, coach-pitchers and athletes are hat/visors, headbands and protective facemasks. All headgear must a color of the uniform. Hats and visors must be worn the correct way, facing the front unless wearing defensive facemask.
• No advertisements or logos allowed, except the logo of your team.
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

SOKY Softball Manual Overview:
Section 2 – Equipment/Uniforms (Cont.)

• Teams must wear matching uniforms. T-shirts or jerseys must be the same color with numbers on the back of the shirts. Members of the team may wear shorts, softball pants or sweats. All players do not have to wear the same kind of pant, but must be of the same color.

• Noisemakers of any kind are not permitted by teams or spectators in the stands.

• Exposed jewelry which is judged by the umpire to be dangerous, must be removed and may not be worn during game. Medical alert bracelets or necklaces are not considered jewelry. If worn, they must be taped to the body, so the medical alert information remains visible.
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

SOKY Softball Manual Overview:
Section 3 – Team/Rosters

- For leagues, regionals and state, teams may start a game with nine (9) players, but the “short-hand” rule will be in effect.
- If a team begins a game with nine (9) players, the vacant position must be listed last on the line-up card. An out will be taken in the vacant position each time the “missing player” comes up to bat.
- If a substitute arrives once the game has begun with a “short-handed” line-up, that player must be placed in the game immediately. If he/she refused to enter, he/she becomes an ineligible player for the remainder of the game.
- At no time may a team play with only eight (8) players (two (2) fewer than normal). This is true even if a player becomes injured and cannot continue. The team will have to forfeit.
**SOKY Softball Manual Overview:**

**Section 3 – Team/Rosters (Cont.)**

- The 10 players should be in the following positions to start the game:
  - a) **Pitcher:** Defensive position is on the rubber
  - b) **Catcher:** Defensive position is behind the plate
  - c) **First Baseman:** Normal defensive position
  - d) **Second Baseman:** Normal defensive position
  - e) **Third Baseman:** Normal defensive position
  - f) **Shortstop:** Normal defensive position
  - g) **Three or Four Outfielders:** Left Field, Center Field, Right Field and either Left Center Field or Right Center Field for the extra outfielder

- In B Division, every eligible will bat and should be listed on the line-up card in batting order.
- In 1A-3A Divisions, teams may utilize the optional extra player or extra hitter (EP or EH) in its batting line-up.
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

SOKY Softball Manual Overview:  
Section 4 - The Game

• A coin toss prior to the start of the game will determine the choice of home team. The team winning the toss may elect to bat first or take the field first.
• A regulation game shall consist of seven (7) innings for the 3A division and five (5) innings for the B, 1A and 2A divisions. In cases of time limit (one hour) or inclement weather a complete game will be considered as five (5) innings for 3A division, and three (3) innings for B, 1A and 2A divisions.
• Both the B and 1A divisions will use a Coach Pitcher:
  • The Coach-Pitcher position was added to assist the lower level teams to become more successful at the offensive end of game. The philosophy is that the Coach-Pitcher is someone who will work with the players offensively at practices and therefore will know particulars for each batter.


Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

SOKY Softball Manual Overview:
Section 4 - The Game (Cont.)

• The Coach-Pitcher must be one of the six listed coaches on the team roster and will only pitch to players on his/her team. Therefore, the coach-pitcher must at least 16 years of age and an approved SOKY Class A volunteer.
• The Coach-Pitcher is allowed to coach the batter or base runners.
• The arch and speed of the pitch are at the Coach-Pitcher’s discretion however they must not come closer than 20ft. From home plate to deliver the pitch.
• Coach-Pitcher’s must wear the exact uniform shirt or jersey as the athletes on the team.
• Coach-Pitcher’s may not wear blue jean shorts or pants (denim).
• Flip-flops and sandals are not permitted. Only tennis shoes and cleats are to be worn by Coach-Pitcher’s, Coaches and athletes.
GUIDELINES FOR OUTDOOR EVENTS
HEAT, COLD AND LIGHTNING WEATHER POLICIES

Heat Guidelines
- A heat index of 95-99 degrees Fahrenheit will result in a shortened event.
- A heat index of 100 degrees Fahrenheit and above will result in a cancelled or postponed event.

Cold Guidelines
- A wind chill of 10 degrees Fahrenheit and below will result in a cancelled event.

Lightning Guidelines
- Activity may not be resumed or started for 30 minutes after both the last sound of thunder and the last flash of lightning.

General Statement
As staff of Special Olympics Kentucky, our number one priority is the safety of our athletes, volunteers and spectators. It is to be understood that all cancellations will be decided as soon as possible, and to assume the event is still on if you have not heard anything from a staff member via email and/or by phone. You may also check for updates on our website and all our social media accounts; Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. In advance, we greatly appreciate your cooperation with this, and ask that you abide by the policies above for both competition and practice/training.
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

SOKY Softball Manual Overview:
Section 4 - The Game (Cont.)

- **Mercy Rule:** In the 3A division a mercy rule will occur when a team is ahead by twenty (20) runs in the third inning, fifteen (15) runs in the fourth inning and ten (10) runs in the fifth inning. For the 2A, 1A and B divisions, a ten (10) run lead after the third inning will result in a mercy rule.
- In the B, 1A and 2A divisions, teams will play ten (10) batters or three outs (whichever comes first) per half inning. The 3A division will play the standard three outs per half inning.
- The stealing of bases is not allowed.
- Sliding is allowed, but not encouraged for the lower divisions or for any athlete that doesn’t understand the proper technique of a slide.
- A base runner must maintain contact with the base in which he/she is entitled to until a legally pitched ball has reached home plate.
- A game tied at the end of regulation play shall be continued by playing additional innings until one side has scored more runs than the other at the end of a complete inning.
In all adaptive divisions (B, 1A and 2A) there will be no in-field fly rule.

In the B where there is a 200ft. fence (depending on field availability), a ball hit over the fence on the fly will be declared an out. If a ball bounces over the fence or rolls under the fence, it will be ruled a ground rule double.

“Time” will be called when the ball reaches the infield in fair territory with defensive player holding the ball in the air and facing the play. The infield is defined as anywhere in the dirt, as long as it is in fair territory.

The only player that can call “time” is the player that has the ball, is in the infield and is in fair territory.

In the B and 1A divisions, a “halfway” line will be drawn between the bases in order to detect which base the runner is awarded. Once the umpire calls time, if any part of the base runner’s body is past the halfway line, the runner will be awarded that base. The runner will be sent back to a base if they have not reached the halfway mark.
Substitutions may be made any time the ball is dead.

Only B division teams will have free substitution on defense. A coach may place any ten (10) defensive players on the field at any time. You do not have to report the changes, and there are no changes to the batting order in the B division.

For all other divisions (1A, 2A, 3A) any of the players (including subs) may be withdrawn and re-entered once, provided players occupy the same batting positions in the line-up. For clarification on the re-entry rule, please refer to the ASA/USA Softball rule book.

You may pinch-run for the catcher position ONLY. You do not have to pinch-run for the catcher if he/she gets on base but may do so if needed for equipment change purposes. If you pinch-run for the catcher, you must do so with the batter that made the last out.
SOKY Softball Manual Overview:

Section 6 – Pitching Regulations

- A legal delivery shall be one delivered with an underhand motion.
- **3A division**: The pitcher shall take the position with at least one (1) foot in contact with the pitcher’s rubber set at 50ft. from home plate.
- **2A division**: The pitcher may move up to 40ft. to deliver a pitch.
- **B and 1A division**: The coach-pitcher should stand where he/she feels they can deliver the best pitch, but must remain at least 20ft. away from home plate.
- A 16ft. diameter circle around the pitcher’s rubber will be added to the infield for the B and 1A divisions. The circle will serve as a boundary for the defensive pitcher position. The defensive position player at pitcher must remain with two feet in the circle until the batter has made contact with the ball.
- In 2A and 3A, the ball shall be delivered with an arc of at least three (3) ft. from the time it leaves the pitcher’s hand until it reaches home plate. The pitched ball shall not reach a height of more than 10ft. at its highest point.
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

SOKY Softball Manual Overview:
Section 7 – Batting Regulations

- In B division only, all eligible players should be listed on the line-up card in batting order – there are no subs within the batting line-up in the B division.
- If a team only has nine (9) athletes, when the “10th” batter comes up in the line-up, that team will take an out.
- In the B and 1A divisions, “balls” will not be called, however “strikes” will be – Three (3) strikes and a batter is out.
- In the 2A and 3A divisions, “balls” and “strikes” will be called – Four balls (4) and a batter receives a walk/Three (3) strikes and a batter is out.
- In the 3A division, the batter will start out with a one (1) ball and one (1) strike count (ASA rule).
- Only in the 3A division, will the batter be declared out if he/she has two (2) strikes and fouls off the next pitch.
- All batters and runners must wear a batting helmet with a chin strap.
Unit 6 – SOKY Softball Specifics

**Special Olympics External Resources**
This online coaching guide covers planning a season, teaching skills, teaching rules, and includes a quick start guide. It also includes virtual training/learning videos in which can offer you a more hands-on experience when learning about the game.

*Online Special Olympics Softball Coaching Guide*
THANK YOU FOR FINISHING THE SOKY SOFTBALL SPORT CERTIFICATION TRAINING PRESENTATION! IN ORDER TO COMPLETE AND RECEIVE CREDIT FOR ENTIRE TRAINING, PLEASE TAKE THE FOLLOWING QUIZ:

[SOKY Softball Sport Certification Quiz]