Welcome to the Volunteer Orientation
Welcome

You are about to start a unique opportunity that will bring you into contact with some very talented athletes and provide experiences that you will never forget.

We here at Special Olympics Kentucky have a saying, “The athletes are why we exist but our volunteers are how we exist.” Whether your responsibility is to coach, help raise funds, or perform any number of other tasks, without your help, Kentucky athletes would not be able to experience the high quality training and competition that you allow us to provide.

Thank you for your commitment to Special Olympics Kentucky Athletes. We look forward to seeing you at an upcoming event.

Sincerely,

Kelli Firquin
Volunteer Services Manager
Goals of this Orientation

1. To understand the Special Olympics Mission.
2. Know the difference between Special Olympics and other sports organizations.
3. Identify the THREE principal factors of divisioning.
4. Understand athlete advancement.
5. Know the opportunities for volunteering.
Special Olympics Mission

“Eunice Kennedy Shriver is a pioneer who literally changed the way persons with intellectual disabilities are treated and viewed, not only in the United States, but in Africa and around the world.”

—Nelson Mandela, President, South Africa
Our Message to the World

Special Olympics is a global movement that unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sports, every day around the world.

Using sports as the catalyst and programming around health and education, Special Olympics is fighting inactivity, injustice and intolerance.

As a result people with intellectual disabilities become accepted and valued members of their communities, which leads to a more respectful and inclusive society for all.
Special Olympics Mission

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

**Our vision** is a world where every person, regardless of their ability or disability, is accepted, welcomed and valued! We strive to create an atmosphere where each individual can contribute to the strength and goodness of his/her family and community. Through the vast array of programs offered by SOKY, we hope to improve the quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities, instilling new attitudes of self-confidence and self-worth and we hope to educate the general public about the value and talents of every human being.

**Special Olympics Oath:**
Let me win; but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.
Our Values

SPORTSMANSHIP WITH JOY
We believe in the transformative power of sports. We embrace the purity of sports at all levels as we witness incredible personal athletic triumphs that shatter stereotypes.

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

UNITY
We are united in our commitment to inclusion, respect and dignity. We build communities of acceptance: loving families, inspired employees, coaches, volunteers and fans. We are one Movement, across nearly every community and country.

BRAVERY
We live our athlete oath: “Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”

PERSEVERANCE
We are capable, tenacious, and resilient. We don’t give up on ourselves or each other
Special Olympics Facts

- Founded by **Eunice Kennedy Shriver**
- **1968** - First International Special Olympics Games held at Soldier Field in Chicago, 26 States and Canada, 1,000 athletes compete in Track and Field and Aquatics.
- **1971** The U.S. Olympic Committee gives Special Olympics official approval as one of only two organizations authorized to use the name “Olympics” in the United States.
- SO Movement includes more than **4.4 Million athletes**
Special Olympics Facts...

- More than 80% of the 4.4 Million live outside the United States
- 33.5% of athletes are adults (22 years of age or older)
- 1 million coaches and volunteers
- More than 70,000 competitions each year (roughly 190/day)
- Programs in more than 170 countries
- Athletes benefit physically, mentally, and socially from participating in Special Olympics
Special Olympics Kentucky Facts

• Year round sports training and competition in 15 Olympic type sports
• Serving over 8,300 athletes
• 9 Individual Sports Areas & 3 Team Sports Regions
• 10 State Level Competitions yearly
• Over 599 additional competitions at local, area, and regional levels
• State wide Polar Bear Plunges, Truck/Plane Pulls, and yearly raffles with the support of the Law Enforcement Torch Run assist in funding the Kentucky Program.
Knowing & Understanding the difference...
Special Olympics and Paralympics are two separate organizations recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). They are similar in that they both focus on sport for athletes with a disability and are run by international non-profit organizations. Apart from that, Special Olympics and the Paralympics differ in three main areas:

1. the disability categories of the athletes
2. the criteria and philosophy under which athletes participate
3. the structure of their respective organizations
The Athletes

To be eligible to participate in Special Olympics, athletes must have an intellectual disability; a cognitive delay, or a development disability, that is, functional limitations in both general learning and adaptive skills.

Paralympics welcomes athletes from six main disability categories: amputee, cerebral palsy, intellectual disability, visually impaired, spinal injuries and Les Autres (French for "the others"). To participate in the Paralympic Games, athletes have to fulfill certain criteria and meet certain qualifying standards in order to be eligible.
Sports Philosophy

Special Olympics believes deeply in the power of sports to help all who participate to fulfill their potential and does not exclude any athlete based upon qualifying scores, but rather divisions the athletes based on those scores for fair competition against others of like ability.

To participate in the Paralympic Games, athletes have to fulfill certain criteria and meet certain qualifying standards in order to be eligible. The Paralympics are about elite performance sport, where athletes go through a stringent qualification process so that the best, or highest qualified based on performance, can compete at the Games.
Structure

Special Olympics is a global movement leading the world of sport with intellectual disabilities and is focused on building a worldwide network of athletes of all ability levels who compete in sports while creating communicates of leaders committed to inclusion, acceptance and dignity for all.

The Paralympics are run by the IPC or International Paralympics Committee. As the international representative organization of sport for athletes with a disability, the IPC comprises elected representatives from around the world. The General Assembly, its highest decision-making body, includes around 165 member nations, represented through their National Paralympic Committees, and four disability-specific organizations.
So What makes Special Olympics Unique?

- A variety of sports opportunities are provided for all ability levels
- Ability groupings are created through a process called divisioning to provide equitable competition for all athletes within each division or competitive level
- Awards are provided to all participants who compete
THREE Principle Factors of divisioning...
What Is Divisioning?

- The system of divisioning serves as the foundation of fair and equitable competitions for athletes of all ability levels.
- Divisioning provides all competitors with a chance to excel.
- No more than 8 athletes or teams per division.
- In every division athletes are grouped by age, gender and ability.
Why Special Olympics Enforces Rules

Special Olympics competition is based on the principle that the enforcement of the Official rules is essential for athletes to develop to their full potential!

When we enforce the rules of the sport, we do the following:

• Protect the rights of the athletes to fair and equal competition.
• Uphold the integrity of the sport and the worldwide Special Olympics movement.
• Provide athletes with a safe competition environment
• Provide a critical foundation for setting goals and standards.
• Prepare athletes for other community sports programs.
• Prepare our athletes for every day life!
Who Are Special Olympic Athletes?
What is an Intellectual Disability?

According to the definition by the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), an individual is considered to have an intellectual disability (previously termed mental retardation) based on the following three criteria:

1. Intellectual functioning level (IQ) is below 70-75;
2. Significant limitations exist in two or more adaptive skill areas; and
3. The condition manifests itself before the age of 18.
Adaptive skill areas are those daily living skills needed to live, work and play in the community. The definition includes 10 adaptive skills: communication, self-care, home living, social skills, leisure, health and safety, self-direction, functional academics, community use and work.

Adaptive skills are assessed in the person’s typical environment across all aspects of an individual’s life. A person with limits in intellectual functioning who does not have limits in adaptive skill areas may not be diagnosed as having an intellectual disability.

"Children with intellectual disabilities grow into adults with intellectual disabilities; they do not remain "eternal children"
Statement of Eligibility

A person is eligible to participate in Special Olympics if they have been identified by an agency of professional as having intellectual disabilities as determined by their localities.

The minimum age requirement for participation in Special Olympics competition is eight years of age.

Special Olympics also offers the Young Athletes™ Program, an innovative sports play program for children with intellectual disabilities between the ages of 2-7, which engages young athletes through developmentally appropriate play activities designed to foster physical, cognitive, and social development while also introducing them to the world of sports prior to Special Olympics eligibility at age eight.
Statement of Eligibility...

Person: 8 years of age or older?

- YES
  - Identified by an agency or professional as having an intellectual disability?
    - NO
      - Not Eligible for Special Olympics
    - YES
      - Eligible for Special Olympics

- NO
  - Have significant learning or vocational problems due to cognitive delays which require or have required specially-designed instruction?
    - YES
      - Functional limitations are not solely due to: physical disabilities, emotional disturbances, behavior disorders, specific learning disabilities, visual impairments, or sensory disabilities?
        - YES
          - Eligible for Special Olympics
        - NO
          - Not Eligible for Special Olympics
FYI on Athlete Medicals

- All athletes are required to have a current medical on file at the SOKY office.
- All coaches are required to carry a copy of each athlete’s medical with them at practices and competitions in the event medical information is needed to be provided to emergency medical staff such as the EMS.

Deadline for Athlete Medicals:
- Due on the Thursday before the event by 12 O'clock. NO EXCEPTIONS
- NEW Medicals NOT received by Thursday at 12 O’clock will result in the athlete not being eligible to compete on that weekend’s event.
- Medicals are good for three (3) years from the date of the physician’s signature.
- Every Medical turned into the state office requires a physician’s signature.
Special Olympics KY Programs and Movement
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**Spring Season:** (Feb. to June) Aquatics, Bocce, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Track & Field, Soccer.

**Summer Season:** (June to Sept.) Golf, Softball.

**Fall Season:** (Aug. to Dec.) Flag-Football, Bowling, Equestrian, Artistic Gymnastics.

**Winter Season:** (Nov. to March) Alpine Skiing, Snowshoeing, Basketball, Cheerleading.
Unified Champion Schools is an education-based program that uses the sports and education initiatives of Special Olympics to activate youth to promote school communities where all young people are agents of change – fostering respect, dignity, and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities.
Unified Champion Schools is for students, teachers and educators who believe:

- there can be more opportunities for young people of all ages and ability levels in school to make friends and work together through volunteering and service-learning.
- students can increase their knowledge, skills and comfort in forming positive relationships with students with intellectual disabilities and can work together to remove social barriers to inclusion.
- students with intellectual disabilities can become a part of the core fabric of their schools and communities.
- education leaders can develop policies which support positive and inclusive school climates.
In 2014 Special Olympics Kentucky and the Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KHSAA) partnered to sponsor an inclusive program where students with and without intellectual disabilities train and compete together for their alma mater.

Currently Unified Track and Field and Bowling is offered across the state.
Find out more about Unified Champion Schools (UCS) and its movement by visiting the UCS webpage.

Click Here to Visit
Unified Sports is a program that combines approximately equal number of Special Olympics athletes with athletes without intellectual disabilities (partners) on sports teams for training and competition. Age and ability of athletes and partners is specifically defined on a sport by sport basis.

Unified Sports is an important program because it expands sports opportunities for athletes and partners seeking new challenges. In addition, Unified Sports dramatically increases inclusion in the community by helping to break down barriers that have historically kept people with and without intellectual disabilities.

SOKY offers Traditional Unified in the following Sports:

- Aquatics
- Bowling
- Golf
- Cheerleading
- Track & Field
- Bocce
Young Athletes is an innovative sports play program for children with intellectual disabilities, ages 2 to 7, designed to introduce them to the world of sports prior to Special Olympics. Young Athletes is designed to meet the physical and developmental needs of children in the areas of physical activity and play. This program is loaded with opportunities for language development, social interaction and learning numbers, colors, shapes, & more.
Athlete Leadership Programs (ALPs)

The purpose of Athlete Leadership Programs 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.

Currently Athlete Leaders in Kentucky lead as:

- Volunteers
- Board Member
- On Input Councils
- Global Messengers
- Coaches
- Officials
- Fundraisers / Donors
Coach Education Program

This program adheres to the quality standards and competencies outlines by Special Olympics, Inc. that are necessary and essential for being a Special Olympics Coach.

Coach refers to an individual who assumes responsibility for athletes, actively trains athletes, and works directly with athletes on the field of play.

Coaches not only provide skills training for athletes but they are also role models and character builders. Coaches give Special Olympics athletes the most immediate awareness of their own worth, ability, courage and capacity to grow and improve.

**ALL** coaches must become certified under the Coach Education Program by the conclusion of their second season coaching.

Visit: [www.soky.org/coachescorner/](http://www.soky.org/coachescorner/) to find out more.
Caring For Special Olympics Athletes Beyond The Field Of Play

Special Olympics International began the Healthy Athletes Initiative in 1996. The mission is to improve, through better health and fitness, the athlete's ability to train and compete. To reach this goal programs involving dentistry, optometry, audiology, health promotion and physical therapy came together to provide services at Special Olympics events. The program provides training for health care professionals and students about the special needs of patients with intellectual disabilities.

Special Olympics Kentucky at the present time offers four healthy athlete programs: Special Smiles, Opening Eyes, Healthy Hearing, FUNfitness and Fit Feet. The programs are conducted at the SOKY Summer Games each June.

“Every time I come away from a Healthy Athletes event, I am pumped up and ready to change the world. Healthy Athletes helps athletes achieve great things they never thought possible—on and off the playing field.”

—Dr. Matthew Holder, MD, MBA, Executive Director of the American Academy of Developmental Medicine and Dentistry and Healthy Athletes Global Medical Advisor and Special Olympics Kentucky Board Member and Immediate Past Chair
How do athletes Benefit?
TRAINING ATHLETES

Training of athletes is very important to the success of any Special Olympics program and mission.

- Athletes are expected to compete in events according to the rules and competition is expected to be fair and evenly contested.
- Athletes are expected to have trained a minimum of 6 to 8 weeks prior to their first competition.

A good training program challenges an athlete to do his/her own personal best.

- Through good training and coaching athletes should always be challenged to move to the next level.
- The time spent training helps to build athlete confidence and strength to perform at their highest ability levels during competition.
Proven Benefits

• Improved strength, stamina, & coordination
• Improved self-esteem & self-confidence
• Healthier life styles and increased health awareness.
• Special Olympics Athletes gain high chance of being employed.
• Greater independent participation in community
Words Matter
Words matter.
~ Language Guidelines

Words can open doors to cultivate the understanding and respect that enable people with disabilities to lead fuller, more independent lives. Words can also create barriers or stereotypes that are not only demeaning to people with disabilities, but also rob them of their individuality. The following language guidelines have been developed by experts for use when writing or speaking about individuals with intellectual disabilities:

Appropriate Terminology

• Refer to participants in Special Olympics as “Special Olympics athletes” rather than “Special Olympians” or “Special Olympic athletes.”

• Refer to individuals, persons or people with intellectual disabilities, rather than “intellectually disabled people” or “the intellectually disabled.”

• A person has intellectual disabilities, rather than is “suffering from,” is “afflicted with” or is “a victim of” mental retardation/intellectual disabilities.
Appropriate Terminology..cont

• A person has intellectual disabilities, rather than is “suffering from,” is “afflicted with” or is “a victim of” mental retardation/intellectual disabilities.

• Distinguish between adults and children with intellectual disabilities. Use adults or children, or older or younger athletes.

• A person “uses” a wheelchair, rather than is “confined” or “restricted to” a wheelchair.

• "Down syndrome" has replaced “Down’s Syndrome” and "mongoloid."

• Refer to participants in Special Olympics as athletes. In no case should the word athletes appear in quotation marks.

• In formal documents, refer to persons with a disability in the same style as persons without a disability: full name on first reference and last name on subsequent references. Do not refer to an individual with intellectual disabilities as "Bill" rather than the journalistically correct "Bill Smith" or "Smith."

• A person has a physical disability rather than crippled.

• Use the words "Special Olympics" when referring to the worldwide Special Olympics movement.
Terminology to Avoid

- Do not use the label "kids" when referring to Special Olympics athletes. Adult athletes are an integral part of the movement.
- Do not use the word "the" in front of Special Olympics unless describing a specific Special Olympics event or official.
- Do not use the adjective "unfortunate" when talking about persons with an intellectual disability. Disabling conditions do not have to be life-defining in a negative way.
- Do not sensationalize the accomplishments of persons with disabilities. While these accomplishments should be recognized and applauded; people in the disability rights movement have tried to make the public aware of the negative impact of referring to the achievements of people with physical or intellectual disabilities with excessive hyperbole.
- Use the word "special" with extreme care when talking about persons with intellectual disabilities. The term, if used excessively in references to Special Olympics athletes and activities, can become a cliché.
How to GET INVOLVED
Volunteer Agreement

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

• Provide for the general welfare, health and safety of all Special Olympics 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 event, competition or training school.

• Not engage in any inappropriate contact or relationship with athletes, volunteers or other participants of Special Olympics.
# Kinds of Volunteers

## CLASS “A” VOLUNTEER

*also be referred to as Long Term or Certified Volunteers*

- Have daily interaction with athletes and are in a position of authority, supervision and trust.
- These types of volunteers include:
  - Coach
  - Head of Delegation
  - Bookkeeper
  - Assistant Coach
  - Local Coordinator
  - Chaperone
  - Board Member
  - Unified Sports® Partner
  - Committee Member

## CLASS “B” VOLUNTEER

*also be referred to as Day of Event Volunteers*

- Assist on the day of the event but are not necessarily in contact with the athletes on a regular basis or have supervisory responsibilities of athletes.
- These type of volunteers include:
  - Fans in the stands
  - Track Judge / Timer
  - Event Times / Scores recorder
  - Referee or Umpire
  - Announcer for Basketball or Softball Games
  - Skills Competition Assistant
  - Bowling Lane Worker
  - And many more…
## Prerequisites for Class “A” and “B” Volunteers

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<th>CLASS “A” VOLUNTEER</th>
<th>CLASS “B” VOLUNTEER</th>
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<td>The following items are required to become an Approved Class A Volunteer.</td>
<td>The following items are required to become a Class B Volunteer.</td>
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<td>• Class “A” Volunteer Application</td>
<td>• Register for a specific event confirming intent to volunteer.</td>
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<td>• Volunteer Orientation Training and quiz.</td>
<td>• Sign in day of event and sign release for PR purposes.</td>
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<td>• Special Olympics International Protective Behaviors course.</td>
<td>Example: your photo taken and put on the SOKY website.</td>
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<td>• CDC’s “Heads Up” Concussion Training for Special Olympics Kentucky and quiz.</td>
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It is not required of Class B Volunteers to complete the Volunteer Orientation Training but is highly recommended.

**Links to ALL trainings can be located by visiting** [www.soky.org/coachcertification/](http://www.soky.org/coachcertification/)
Working With Special Olympics Athletes

• Be yourself - Use your normal voice and give support. Try not to over praise.

• Excessive hugging and kissing is NOT appropriate. Encouraging pats on the back or handshakes is also another way of praising an athlete. Let the athlete take the lead as to what recognition they would be comfortable with.

• Get to know the athlete - There may be opportunities to sit and talk to a child or an adult and get to know who they are, where they work, go to school, etc.

• Expect and encourage appropriate behavior AND sportsmanship throughout the event.
Be a Day of Event Volunteer

Day of event volunteer opportunities typically are:

• 3 to 8 hour commitments.
• On the weekend with a few opportunities throughout the week.
• Require individual event registration showing your intent to fill the select opportunity.
• Opportunities might be running a stop watch at track, recording distances, running a scoreboard.
• Majority of our opportunities do not require any previous sports knowledge. Skilled opportunities are available such as a softball/baseball umpire.
Become A Coach

**HEAD COACH:** Assumes overall responsibility for the delegation, team, etc. He/She must be at least 18 years of age and a responsible individual who can commit time on at least a weekly basis throughout the respective sport season. (Coach Education Certification is required.)

**ASSISTANT COACH:** He/She must be at least 16 years of age and a responsible individual who can commit time on at least a weekly basis throughout the respective sport season. (Coach Education Certification is required.)

**Important Note:** Coaches, chaperons, and additional volunteers under the age of 18 are NOT permitted to transport Special Olympic Athletes.
The mission of the Kentucky Law Enforcement Torch Run® (LETR) for Special Olympics is to raise funds for and awareness of Special Olympics Kentucky. Law enforcement officers from throughout the state, carry the Flame of Hope in honor of the Special Olympics athletes in their area and around the world.

**Kentucky:** The Torch Run began in Kentucky in 1986 with law enforcement personnel from federal, military, state, county and local agencies participating in a year-long fundraising campaign and has raised over $1.9 million for Special Olympics Kentucky since its inception.
**Cops On Doughnut Shops:**
Officers take to the roofs of Krispy Kreme retail stores across the country where they collect donations from customers as they eat, sleep and play on the rooftops of Krispy Kreme stores.

**Annual LETR T-Shirt Sales:**
LETR shirts are produced each year and identify the top fundraising agencies of the past year in print on the back of each shirt for all of Kentucky to see. You can sell them as a fundraiser or buy them for your departments.

**Tip-A-Cop:**
Law enforcement officers and volunteers shed their badges and take up trays to help staffs take care of restaurant customers from all over Kentucky by serving and working for additional "tips" to help fund Special Olympics events.

**Trivia Night:**
Trivia Nights can be held anywhere and usually include 8 to 10-person teams answering 10 questions from 10 different categories. There are lots of prizes, raffles and fun and an easy way to raise funds!

**Polar Plunges:**
Get your departments involved by teaming up to take the plunge in one of six held each year. Your department is also needed for setup and logistics.

**Truck/Plane Pulls:**
Get your departments involved by teaming up pull a loaded UPS 18 wheeler or a DHL 767 plane. Teams with the fastest pull times receive trophies, gifts, bragging rights and help fund Special Olympic events.
As Special Olympics athlete Ben Collins said,  

“No Volunteers, No Special Olympics”
Thank you for becoming a Special Olympics Kentucky Volunteer!

**Louisville Office**
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(502) 326-3971 (fax)

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(502) 695-8222
(502) 695-0496 (fax)

Website: [www.soky.org](http://www.soky.org)
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/sokentucky](http://www.facebook.com/sokentucky)
Twitter: [@sokentucky](http://twitter.com/sokentucky)
Click [Here](#) to Take the Volunteer Orientation Quiz

**REQUIRED** to complete the course.