



Special Olympics

Motor Activities Training Program

Coaches Guide

Section II: Personnel



Special Olympics Motor Activities Training Program: Personnel

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Coaching Staff

The coaching staff often includes a Motor Activity Training Program Sports Manager at the Program or Area Level. This person oversees multiple Motor Activity Training Programs and coordinates multi-program activities. The Motor Activity Training Program Head Coach, Assistant Coaches, Peer Coaches and volunteers are also part of the Motor Activity Training Program Team. **All Coaches must successfully complete certification requirements to be a Special Olympics Motor Activity Training Program Coach. Head Coaches must also have prior experience and certification in the field of Adapted Physical Education, Physical Therapy or a related field specializing in work with persons with severe or profound disabilities.** In some countries, coaches are required by their government to also be a graduate from an institution of higher education or to have received other special qualifications in order to coach Special Olympics athletes. The following section outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Motor Activity Training Program Head Coach, assistant coaches and peer coaches.



Responsibilities of Motor Activity Training Program Head Coach

The Motor Activity Training Program Head Coach is responsible for the following duties.

1. Obtain knowledge of the athlete's background (e.g., medical, behavioral, etc.)
2. Obtain knowledge of the athlete's activity preference and family sport goals
3. Administer the Motor Activity Training Program Athlete Evaluations (see Evaluation section)
4. Develop and oversee the training program of each athlete
5. Manage all of the activities involved in training athletes, other coaches, peer coaches and volunteers
6. Consult with members of the athlete's multidisciplinary team prior to and throughout the development of the training program to ensure the athletes' safe participation.
7. Meet with administrators or supervisors of local schools or residential facilities to discuss their support and assistance with the Motor Activity Training Program. With the support of the facility's administrative staff, Head Coaches should give a short presentation on the Motor Activity Training Program to interested personnel and potential assistant or peer coaches.
8. Obtain permission from parents/guardians of peer coaches for them to participate in the Program.
9. Conduct training programs for assistant coaches and peer coaches.
10. Ensure that there is a certified Motor Activity Training Program coach supervising each training session.
11. Maintain confidential files and sport activity records on each athlete throughout the training program and activity participation.
12. Complete all the registration forms for Motor Activity Training Program participation in accordance with Special Olympics rules.



Assistant Motor Activity Training Program Coaches

Within a Special Olympics program there may be several assistant coaches in different communities. Assistant Coaches work closely with both the Head Coach and the Peer Coaches. Major responsibilities of the Assistant Coach are to:

- Secure facilities
- Find, evaluate and register athletes
- Under the supervision of the head coach: work with athletes on individual skill development and training programs
- Plan and conduct Motor Activity Training Program Days

Peer Coaches

A peer coach is an individual of similar age to the athlete who, under supervision of a certified Motor Activity Training Program coach, assists with the athlete's eight-week training program. Peer coaches may be recruited from public and private schools, colleges, recreation centers, religious organizations or clubs in the local area. Peer coaches must commit to attending all of the training sessions and Motor Activity Training Program Days. In some cases, peer coaches may be one or two years younger than the athlete. The exception to this is in the case of very young athletes. Peers who are below ten years of age may lack the maturity to serve as peer coaches.

The following checklist is intended to assist coaches with the training of their peer coaches. Coaches should spend sufficient time with their peer coaches to ensure that their athletes have rewarding training experiences.



Peer Coach Checklist

Things Peer Coaches Should Know

- Similarities between themselves and the athletes (i.e. both enjoy sports, are same age.)
- Goals of the Motor Activity Training Program
- Concerns related specifically to the athlete's safety (i.e. limited range of motion, may tire easily, medication side effects).
- Need for peer coaches to be respectful and caring when working with the athletes

For a successful experience, the peer coach should:

- Make a commitment to his/her athlete
- Be on time and prepared for each training session
- Greet the athlete; “see” the person not the disability
- Stay with athlete throughout the training session or Motor Activity Training Program Activity
- Smile and be friendly
- Face the athlete when providing instruction
- Talk with the athlete about your interests when you are not involved in the activity
- Learn athletes’ preferred forms of communication (speech, sign language, pictures or symbols, etc.)
- Encourage athletes with specific, positive feedback – name something they did well.
- Be patient
- Have fun - Enjoy the time spent with your athlete
- Demonstrate the activity correctly
- Give athlete time to learn one skill before starting a new sport skill
- Find ways athletes can perform the activity with maximum independence
- Ask for help, if needed
- Keep a positive attitude and be proud of your accomplishments with each athlete
- Say goodbye to the athlete and remind him/her of the next training session
- Talk with your friends and family about your experiences
- Attend a seminar to learn about Special Olympics mission and philosophy.
- Remember - Behind every great athlete is a great coach!



Remember that virtually every athlete participating in the Motor Skill Development Program is surrounded by a support network that includes parents, care givers, Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Adapted Physical Education Teachers, Classroom Teachers, Social Workers, etc. All these people are potential resources on questions of what the athlete likes, dislikes, is interested in and capable of. Include as many of them as possible in the process of coaching.

Responsibilities of Head Coach to Peer Coaches

The head coach meets with newly recruited peer coaches and explains their duties and responsibilities during training programs and Motor Activity Training Program culminating activities. Prior to meeting their athletes, peer coaches should be aware of the various steps used in the sport activity in which their athletes will participate. Additionally, they need to know how their athlete's specific disabilities will affect the performance of the activity. Head Coaches should reassure all peer coaches that a trained Motor Activity Training Program coach will supervise each training session. The Motor Activity Training Program Head Coach is responsible for the following duties when training and working with peer coaches:

- Demonstrate how to position and cue the athlete
- Discuss the athlete's preferred method(s) of communication (i.e. speech, sign language, picture cards, etc.)
- Provide information related to walkers, wheelchairs, or other mobility equipment specific to the athlete
- Demonstrate proper and safe use of any assistive devices
- Create an atmosphere in which peer coaches can ask questions, make suggestions and develop a positive relationship with the athlete
- Encourage peer coaches to allow sufficient time for athlete responses (avoid acting too quickly to assist the athlete)
- Be realistic with peer coaches about the progress rate of the athletes' skills (allow enough time in the training program for the athlete to develop)
- Inform peer coaches of procedures to be followed in case of an emergency (i.e., fire alarm, injury, illness, etc.)
- Establish a format and routine for debriefing sessions
- Recognize and honor peer coaches at Motor Activity Training Program Days by way of:
 - Certificates of Recognition
 - T-shirts
 - Ribbons or MVP awards
 - Recognition in the printed Motor Activity Training Program Day programs

Educational and Therapeutic Personnel

The role of a Special Olympics Motor Activity Training Program coach is to provide training and culminating activities for athletes with significant intellectual disability. In addition to their Special Olympics Motor Activity Training Program training, these athletes probably also receive services from a variety of professionals. These multidisciplinary professional teams can include special educators, adapted physical educators, physical therapists, occupational therapists, respiratory therapists and speech pathologists/therapists. Members of an athlete's multidisciplinary team should be consulted prior to and throughout the development of the athlete's training program to ensure the athletes' safe participation and to recommend opportunities for reinforcement in all aspects of an athlete's life. For example, this team of professionals may have insight into favored activities or areas of recent progress. Likewise, they will know of any positions or movements the athlete should avoid. Therefore, the athlete's training program should be designed so that it complements and doesn't interfere with the athlete's overall therapeutic program.

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