



Summary of Coach Training & Certification Requirements



The key to improving athlete performance and well-being is based on the quality of sport training and experiences provided by the local Special Olympics coach. ("Coach" refers to an individual who assumes responsibility for athletes, actively trains athletes, and coaches them in competitions [the Class A Volunteer].) The Special Olympics North America Coach Education System identifies basic standards and competencies necessary and essential for being a Special Olympics coach. Standardization of essential knowledge and coaching proficiency adds credibility and consistency to the entire Special Olympics North America Coach Education System. The Special Olympics

North America Coach Education System will assist Special Olympics Programs in designing and providing quality sports training for Special Olympics coaches. In addition, coaches will gain new and/or improved competencies and skills, which will provide better opportunities for their athletes.

For several months in late 2013, the Special Olympics North America Coach Development Task Force discussed the SOI Coach Definition, the minimum requirements for certification and, specifically, the requirement that prospective coaches work for at least 10 hours with Special Olympics athletes under an experienced coach. Input was sought from the Unified Sports® Committee, the USLC Sports Committee and the people responsible for sport development inside and outside the Region. The Coach Development Task Force feels that the recommended wording below captures the spirit of an educated and supported volunteer coach. The belief is that base-level competency can be demonstrated through education, which qualifies/certifies the coach to work with Special Olympics athletes. Education is easier to track and provides the coach entry-level certification. The Program is given the ability and flexibility to determine what kind of support coaches need and how to best provide it. The following criteria have been approved by SOI as Special Olympics North America's "Program-specific certification standards," as noted in the Program Information Profile (PIP).

Minimum criteria to become a Special Olympics certified head coach

To receive Special Olympics head coach certification, an individual will:

1. Complete the volunteer form (Class A / to work with athletes), the online Protective Behaviors training and a General Orientation that provides a basic introduction to Special Olympics.
2. Complete a course on the basics of teaching and coaching Special Olympics athletes.
3. Complete an approved course on teaching and coaching a specific sport.
4. Receive endorsement from his/her Program as having fulfilled the above criteria, as well as general screening approval as a suitable individual to work with Special Olympics athletes.

The goals of the 4 criteria are to provide the coach with a general understanding and knowledge of Special Olympics; teaching and coaching the Special Olympics athlete; general and Special Olympics sport rules and coaching pedagogy; and personal character. It is understood that Programs are granted the necessary latitude to verify the achievement of these goals and grant SOI Coach Certification.

As mentioned, the quality and experience level of the Special Olympics certified coach resulting from the completion of the 4 steps above may vary according to local legal, cultural, economic and practical considerations. However, the 4 steps above define a baseline process that acknowledges a Special Olympics certified coach, so that SOI can track our growth to 530,000 Special Olympics certified coaches by 2015.





Parameters

- With the goal of becoming a certified head coach, the coach will achieve certification when he/she comes into that position. However, he/she has up to three years to do so upon entering Special Olympics. It is also recommended that an assistant coach should be working toward certification.
- The above criteria can be combined to achieve multiple requirements in any course. For example, the basics of Coaching Special Olympics Athletes can be incorporated into a sport-specific course or into a General Orientation.
- Base-level competency is achieved through this education (the first three criteria), which initially qualifies/certifies an individual to work with Special Olympics athletes.
- The next step in effectively promoting excellence in coaching is demonstrating competency while working with athletes during a sport-specific course, while coaching Special Olympics athletes or through a mentorship program under an experienced coach. A new coach needs to be supported appropriately and should be connected with a mentor (inside or outside of Special Olympics depending on what the coach needs) if he or she is unable to work under the guidance of a head coach.
- In order to maintain and/or upgrade coach certification, a coach must continue his/her coaching experience and education with at least one approved course or mentoring program every three years. Ongoing experience and education is important to the coach's ability to continue providing the best instruction and increased opportunities to his or her athletes.
- Within six years of entry-level certification, a head coach should complete the Principles of Coaching Course. It is strongly recommended for assistant coaches.
- To coach a Special Olympics Unified Sports team above the Program Level, a coach must be certified in Coaching Unified Sports. It is strongly recommended that a coach who coaches Special Olympics Unified Sports at any level be Special Olympics Unified Sports certified.
- Programs are given the latitude to design and implement a coaching education program that adheres to the spirit of the SOI requirements for certification and provides athletes with highly trained coaches who can help them reach their goals or maximum potential.

Approved courses, seminars or workshops

Each Special Olympics Accredited Program is able to utilize the following courses or design and personalize a variety of training formats (online courses; webinars; one-to-one peer mentoring) to meet the needs of coaches with varying backgrounds, as long as the standards and competencies are achieved. This also includes online courses from the National Governing Bodies, American Sport Education Program (ASEP), the National Federation of State High Schools (NFHS), Positive Coaching Alliance, Responsible Sports and others. *Courses required for entry certification.



- Special Olympics General Orientation [formerly General Session]* (Is only required once)
- Special Olympics Athlete Protective Behaviors* (An update is required every three years.)
- Coaching Special Olympics Athletes Course* (face-to-face and online course)
- Special Olympics or NGB/Sport Organization Skills Courses or comparable experience*
- Coaching Special Olympics Unified Sports® (face-to-face and online course)
- Special Olympics Principles of Coaching Course (face-to-face and online course)
- Special Olympics or NGB Tactics Courses
- Special Olympics Mentoring Program (can be designed for any course)
- First-Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Course
- Sport-Specific Performance Training and Nutrition
- Athlete Behavior Characteristics and Strategies to Improve Learning
- Officials Training; Rules Updates
- National Governing Body Courses; other sports organizations' coaching courses whether face-to-face or online or DVD, such as from the American Sport Education Program (ASEP), National Federation of State High Schools (NFHS), Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA), etc.
- Other Special Olympics approved courses for re-certification (any courses that help a coach become a better coach will be accepted)