**Family Engagement Ideas**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | * **Family Health** |
|  |  |
|  | * Host a Family Health Forum. * Train family members as Young Athletes Coaches. * Organize Family Fitness Challenges that can be done at home. |
|  |  |
|  | * **Sport** |
|  |  |
|  | * Host Family Sports Days specifically designed for families to participate alongside their athletes. This could include modified sports activities suitable for all abilities. Emphasize the importance of physical activity for the whole family. * Provide keepsake items to families at competitions (buttons, family ribbons, magnets). * Educate coaches on how to properly engage families at practices and competitions. * Plan a family meeting (in-person, phone, or virtual) at the beginning of sports seasons to answer any frequently asked questions. |
|  |  |
|  | * **School** |
|  |  |
|  | * Organize school-wide events that celebrate inclusion and diversity, where Special Olympics families are invited and feel welcome. * Host inclusive sports days, cultural festivals, or talent shows that involve all students and families, including those with intellectual disabilities (ID). * Encourage regular communication between teachers and Special Olympics families. This can include regular parent-teacher conferences, emails, or a communication platform where updates and progress can be shared. * Offer workshops to teachers and coaches on effective communication and collaboration with Special Olympics families. * Establish a family resource center within the school where Special Olympics families can access information, resources, and support. Include materials on educational strategies, community services, and upcoming Special Olympics events. * Work with schools to conduct workshops for families of students with ID on topics such as navigating the education system, advocating for their child, and accessing support services. Collaborate with local organizations and professionals to provide valuable information. * Feature Special Olympics athlete success stories in school newsletters, on bulletin boards, or during school assemblies to inspire and motivate new and existing families. |
|  |  |
|  | * **General** |
|  |  |
|  | * **Recognition and Celebrations:** Celebrate not only the achievements of the athletes but also the efforts of the families. Host recognition events to honor their commitment and support. Acknowledge milestones and progress made by athletes and their families. * **Buddy System:** Implement a buddy system where experienced Special Olympics families mentor and support newer families. This can create a sense of community and provide a valuable support network. * **Host workshops for siblings:** Conduct workshops specifically for siblings of athletes, addressing their unique experiences and providing tools to navigate challenges. Create a space where siblings can connect with others who share similar experiences. * **Family Volunteer Opportunities:** Encourage families to volunteer together at Special Olympics events or in the community. This not only strengthens the bond among family members but also contributes to the larger Special Olympics community. * **Storytelling and Media:** Share success stories of Special Olympics families through newsletters, blogs, or local media. Highlighting diverse stories can inspire and connect families who may be facing similar challenges. * **Family Events:** Organize regular family events where families can come together in a relaxed and fun setting. This could be a picnic, a sports day, or a themed party. Include activities that cater to various abilities and interests to ensure everyone feels included. * **Parent Support Groups:** Establish a support group for parents and caregivers. This can provide a platform for sharing experiences, advice, and resources. Invite guest speakers, such as professionals in the field of special education or sports, to share insights. * **Online Communities:** Create an online platform or social media group where families can connect, share stories, and offer support to one another. Facilitate discussions around specific topics, such as training tips, managing stress, or celebrating achievements. * Establish a family registration form to collect family information. * Establish a local Family Leadership Council:   **Recommended Responsibilities of Council Members (to be approved by Program leadership):**   * + Support Program’s family engagement goals and objectives.   + Encourage families to be more involved in Special Olympics .   + Create and disseminate family resources.   + Work with athlete leaders to recruit more families and athletes.   + Develop a Family Recognition Program .   + Disseminate local competition information to families.   + Arrange a registration/hospitality area for families at local competitions.   + Offer special activities for family members attending area competitions.   + Support planning of Family Health Forums.   + Establish a calendar of events for family members.   + Create and run family-focused events. * Host a yearly New Family Orientation meeting or webinar to welcome new families to the Movement. * Create an E-library: Staff, volunteers and families can access this library and share Special Olympics photos, best practices, and success stories. * Create a group for families on a messaging platform such as WhatsApp to connect with one another. * Have a “frequently asked questions” section on your website or social media. * Train families as Leaders. * Family representation on advisory boards or committees. * Create a family engagement structure in your local Program. * Host Parent and Caregiver Workshops.   **Topic Ideas:**   * + Estate Planning   + Creating a will   + Athlete rights   + Education   + CRPD   + Sibling engagement |
|  |  |
|  | * **Resources** |
|  |  |
|  | * https://resources.specialolympics.org/community-building/families |
|  |  |

