

Role of Health Messenger Mentors

Athlete leaders benefit from the support of a volunteer **Mentor**. Some athletes may need regular or occasional support throughout their career as a leader. Others may quickly be able to serve in leadership roles more independently. At all times, the mentor should reserve their own opinions, while supporting the athlete leader's involvement and ability to make decisions.



WHAT Mentors for Health Messengers do:

- Attend Health Messenger training with the athlete
- Ensure opportunities to apply learnings
- Act as a leadership "coach"
- Be an advocate for the athlete, if needed
- Provide constructive feedback
- Research learning opportunities
- Coordinate logistics with caregiver(s), if applicable
- Help athlete stay on task
- Help keep athlete accountable
- Provide transportation if needed

HOW Mentors do it:

- Commit to working with the athlete, providing support as needed
- Get to know the athlete ~ communication style, support needs, goals in becoming an athlete leader
- Learn about local Special Olympics health efforts and possible opportunities
- Allow the athlete to express himself or herself – give help only if he or she can't
- Listen – people want to know what the athlete thinks, not the ideas of the mentor
- Understand Special Olympics and the global health program, made possible by the Golisano Foundation
- Always give encouragement – especially before a speech or event
- Value your athlete's opinions and preferences
- Represent Special Olympics in a professional manner

Basic Qualifications

- Must be 21 years of age or older
- Must be an approved Class A volunteer (*background check, protective behavior class*)
- Assist with transportation needs as they arise
- Commit to be a mentor for at least one year
- Willingness to commit to a minimum of 5 hrs./month depending on athlete's activities

Tips from Health Messenger mentors

- Mentorship is individual and changes with the relationship over time.
- Support your Health Messenger and keep his or her best interests in mind.
- Develop a relationship with the Health Messenger to better understand his or her learning style, personal/professional goals, and support needs.
- Assist with writing and constructing scripts for presentations and speeches as well as emails and social media posts, if desired. Guide and encourage Health Messengers to personally write as much as possible and then assist with editing as needed.
- Make recommendations for further professional development, if the Health Messenger is interested.
- Meet regularly.
- Share firsthand experiences regarding how to handle relevant professional situations.
- Provide support and encourage Health Messengers to do their best. For some, this might mean assisting with speech practice, giving advice or possibly helping with professional attire (i.e. brushed hair, tucked-in shirt, etc.).
- Share gentle reminders, as needed, so the Health Messenger does not have to remember the little things when focused on a presentation. For some mentors, it might be helpful to remind the athlete health leader with whom they work to use the restroom before the presentation, bring a water bottle or pen/paper, etc.
- Practice patience. The Health Messenger you work with may be looking to you for how to react to certain situations.
- Be a trusted partner.