

**Health Messenger Mentor – Role Description**

A Health Messenger is a Special Olympics athlete who has been trained to serve as a health and wellness leader, educator, advocate, and role model within their community.

The aims of the Health Messenger program include:

* providing athletes with a technical skill set that enhances their ability to be a leader and advocate for themselves and others in all aspects of health (e.g., health, fitness, with healthcare providers, etc.),
* empowering athletes to advocate for the health needs of people with intellectual disabilities, and
* promoting athlete knowledge of health and change in health behaviors.

**A Health Messenger Mentor is someone who supports the athlete in their training as a Health Messenger and in their Health Messenger role after the training is over.**

## What Mentors do

* Attend Health Messenger training with the athlete
* Ensure opportunities to activate the Health Messenger to apply learnings
* Provide constructive feedback to the Health Messenger and the Program
* Coordinate logistics with caregiver(s), if applicable
* Help athlete stay on task and remain accountable (e.g., homework during the training, training attendance, activation)
* Research learning opportunities

## How Mentors do it

* Recognize the role as a true partnership
  + Value the Health Messenger’s opinions and preferences
  + 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
  + Each mentorship is unique and changes with the relationship over time; the mentor may fade their assistance as the Health Messenger becomes more proficient and capable
* Utilize the complementary—and likely evolving—strengths you and the athlete with whom you work possess
  + Get to know the athlete ~ communication style, support needs, goals in becoming an athlete leader
  + Consistency, reliability, and boundaries are key.
  + Be focused but flexible.
* Personal and professional learning
  + Represent Special Olympics in a professional manner
  + Always give encouragement – especially before a speech or event
  + Learn about local Special Olympics health efforts and possible opportunities
  + Understand Special Olympics and Special Olympics Health, made possible globally by the Golisano Foundation and the CDC in the US.

## Basic Qualifications

* Must be 21 years of age or older
* Must be an approved Class A volunteer (background check, protective behavior class)
* Must complete the Athlete Leadership: Mentor Course on learn.specialolympics.org
* Must be available for the “Becoming a Health Messenger” training that the athlete is interested in
* Must commit to be a mentor for at least one year
* Willingness to commit to a minimum of 5 hours per month depending on athlete’s activities