

FITNESS THROUGH SPORT

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES WEBINAR - JULY 11, 2023

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Special Olympics
Health

MADE
POSSIBLE BY **Golisano** FOUNDATION



AGENDA

- 2022 Fitness through Sport Evaluation findings
- Fitness through Sport guiding strategy
- Guidelines for implementation
- Next steps and call to action

2022 FTS EVALUATION FINDINGS



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

To be a great athlete, you must be a healthy athlete

Fitness through Sport (FTS) describes the promotion of health and fitness within sports settings

EVALUATION METHODS

Aims



- (1) Describe best practices and desired programmatic approaches,
- (2) Explore leadership roles and training needs,
- (3) Understand expected outcomes and how they can be measured, and
- (4) Compile resource needs for programming.

Recruitment



SO Regional sport and health staff were consulted to determine the best Programs to invite to participate in this evaluation. Programs that were recruited for the evaluation had previously reported conducting some level of health promotion programming at sports practice.



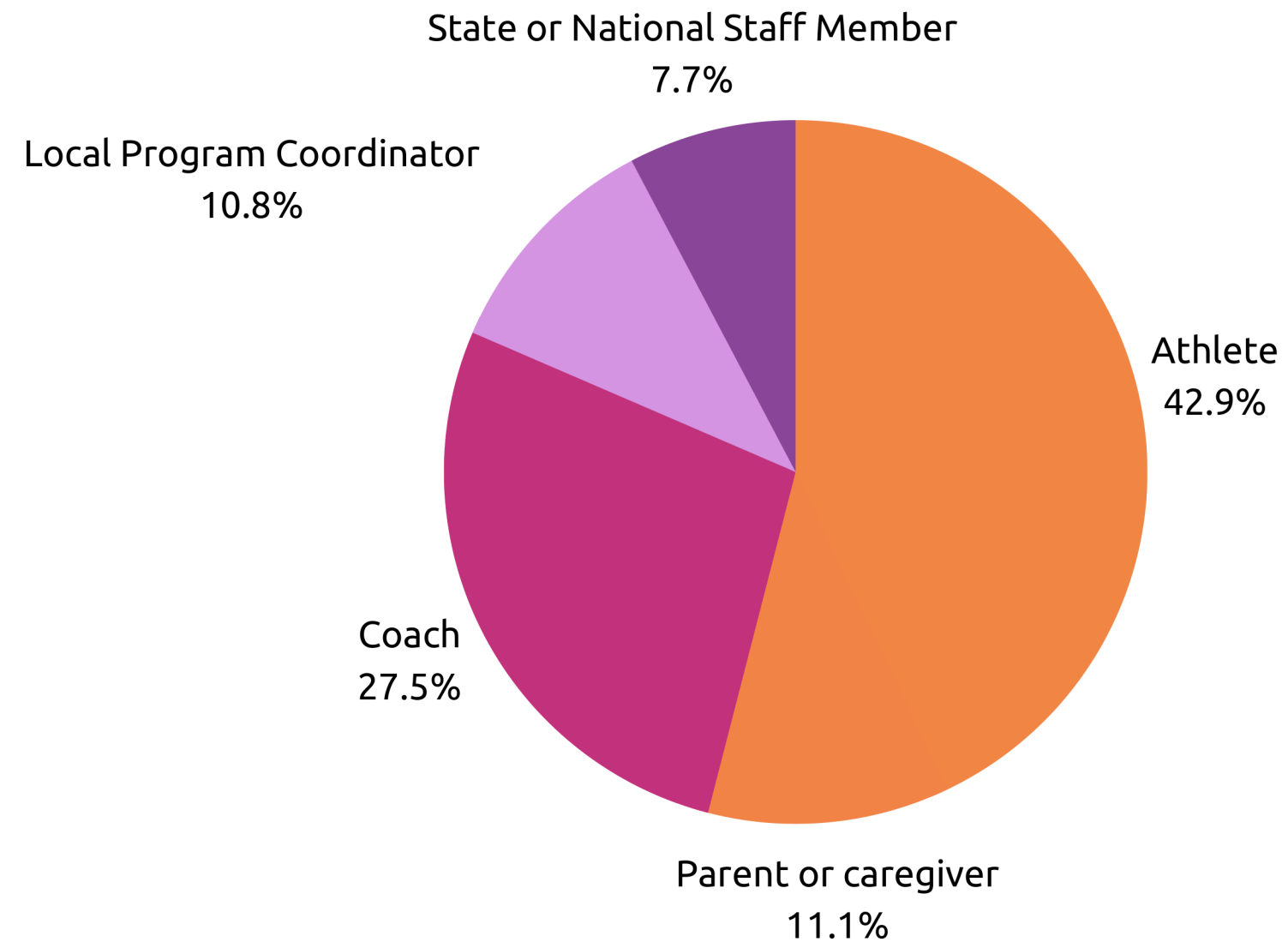
Surveys



Focus Groups

EVALUATION SAMPLE

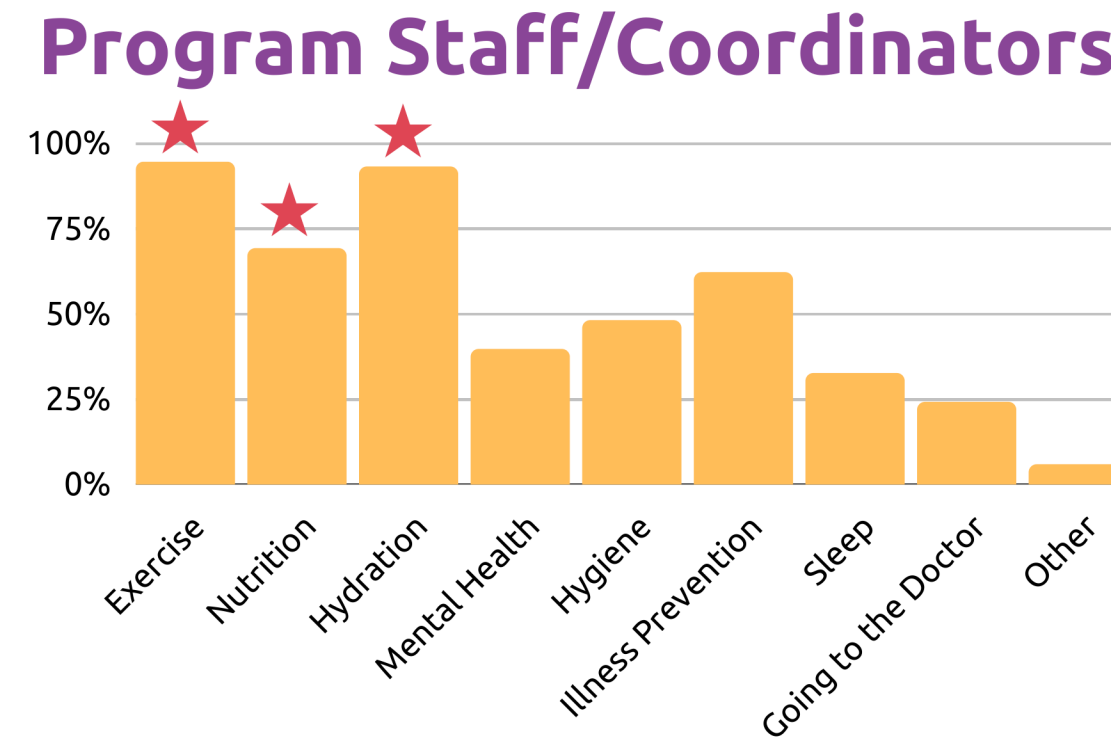
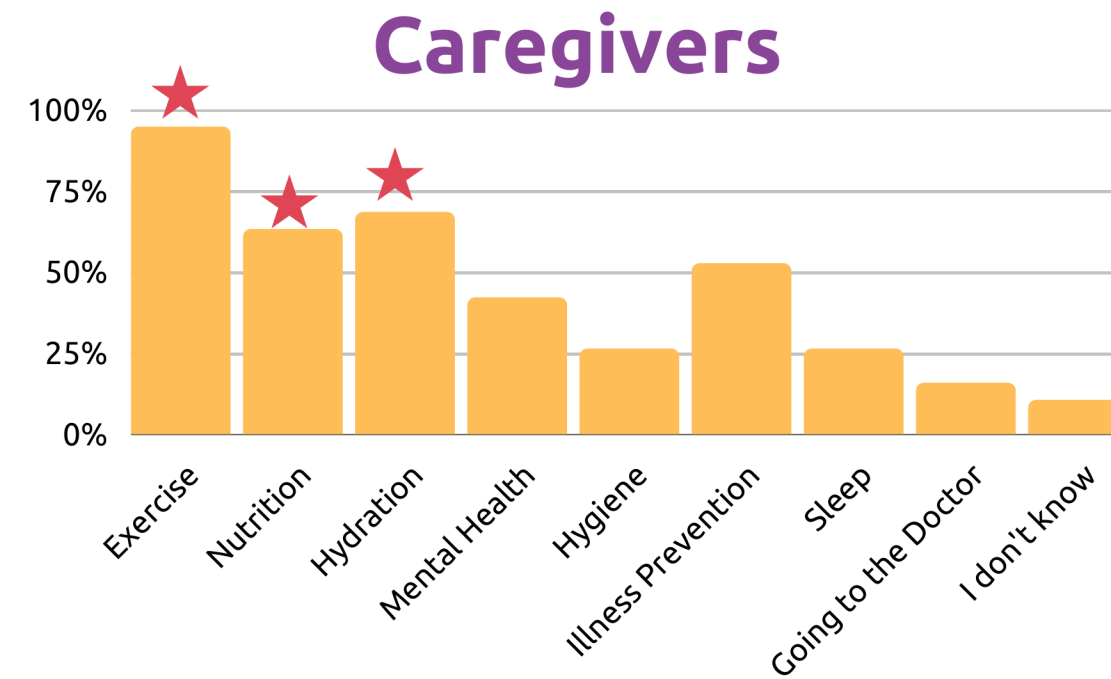
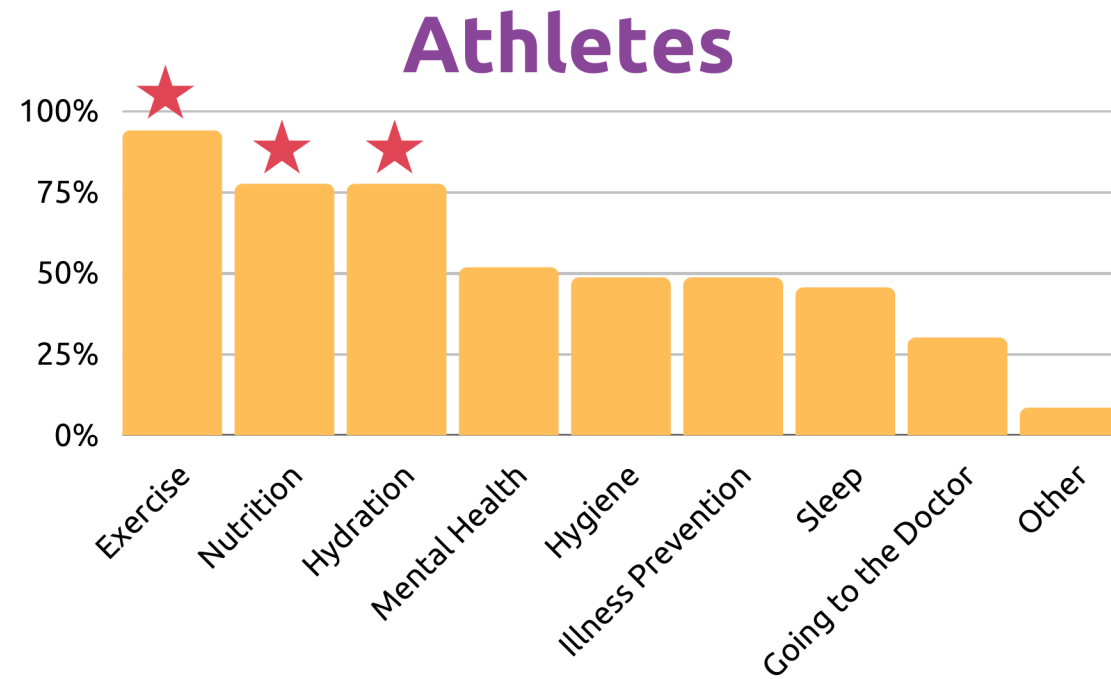
Survey Participation



Focus Group Participation

Stakeholders	Focus Groups	Interviews	Total Participants
Athletes	2		9
Caregivers	3		8
Coaches	2	3	7
Program Staff	2		8
Total	9	3	32

KEY THEMES Health and Fitness Topics Discussed at Practice



KEY THEMES

Important Health and Fitness Topics

- **Exercise, nutrition, and hydration were top priorities** when considering what athletes need to know about health and fitness.
- **Focus groups were quick to shift to *how* athletes should learn about health and fitness after they discussed what they should learn.**
 - Goal setting, increasing knowledge, changing attitudes, building social support, role modeling, and providing rewards were seen as critical strategies for behavior change.



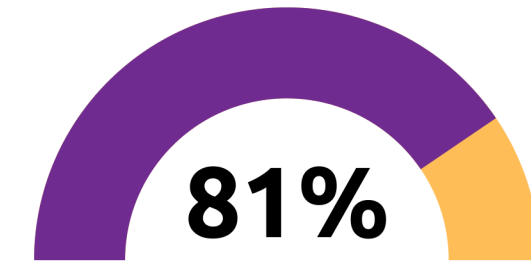
So sometimes when we have practice, we do our own little challenges like, 'Hey. This week we're now trying to work on drinking a lot, a lot of water and I'm down there, whoever drinks, the most water gets a prize' or something they can do really fun during practice or um we do like a physical challenge like how many pushups can everyone do.

– Athlete, Colorado, USA

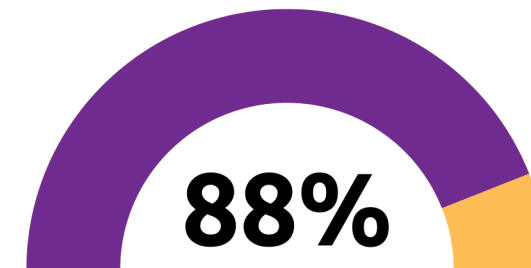
KEY THEMES

Current Programming

- Health and fitness are promoted **weekly or at every practice**
- Activities typically last **5 to 15 minutes** and include:
 - Discussions (67%)
 - Practicing exercises (90%)
 - Visual prompts (13%)
 - Handouts (16%)
 - Structured Curriculum (13%)



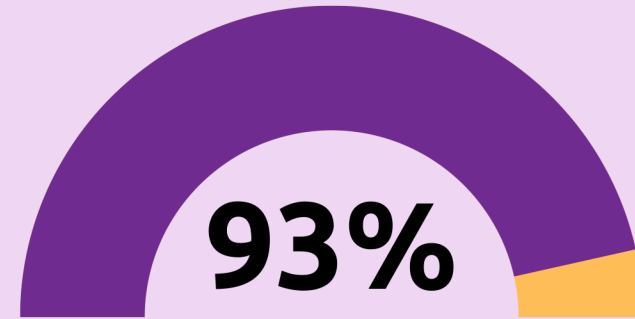
Athletes report learning about health and fitness at sports practice



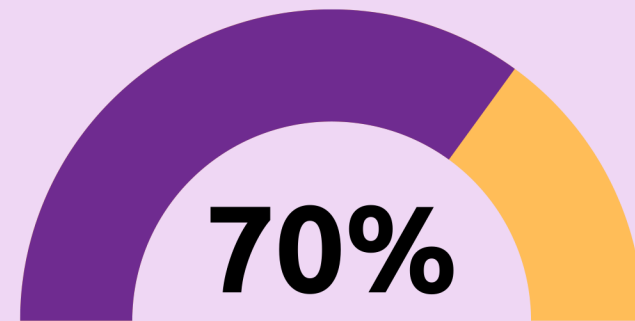
Coaches report promoting health and fitness at sports practice

KEY THEMES

Current Programming



Athletes made changes because of the information they learned



Coaches felt athletes made changes because of the information they learned at practice

Evidence of athlete health and fitness changes as described by coaches:



Weight loss



Behavior change



More strength and stamina



Improved performance



Fewer injuries



More confidence

KEY THEMES

Key Leaders to Promote Fitness through Sport



I think the coach is essential, more than anything else, because in most cases, they [athletes] at least listen--at least locally--some more directly than to their parents... Modeling, modeling, modeling with our athletes, it does wonders!"

– Program Staff, Malta



Coaches (89%)



Athlete Leaders (38%)



Health and Fitness Professionals
(24%)

KEY THEMES

Ideal Programming

Within sports practice:

- Longer practices
- Proper warm-up and cool-down routines
- Sport-specific exercises for conditioning
- Structured health tips with visual aids
- Structured practice sessions that lead to more moderate-to-vigorous physical activity

Support outside of their sports:

- Increased caregiver support at home
- In-person fitness programming that occurs between sports sessions or seasons
- Virtual programming
- More fitness challenges.
- Assessment and tracking

All programming should lead to healthier athletes!

KEY THEMES

Resource Needs

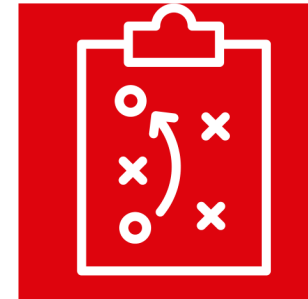
- **Athlete Resources:**
 - visual aids, handouts, recipes cards, and sports specific exercise library.
- **Digital resources** (e.g. online materials, a fitness app)
- **Guidelines and lesson plans**
- **Training for the key leaders**
- **Systems for assessment and data collection**
- **Supportive partnerships**



FITNESS THROUGH SPORT GUIDING STRATEGY



STRATEGIC GOALS



Sports practices serve as a catalyst for fitness and healthy lifestyles



Competitions provide a healthy and safe environment for athletes to achieve their personal best



Key supporters have the knowledge and resources to assist athletes to be healthy and fit



Athletes and coaches **utilize data** to drive personal improvement



Members across the movement **spread messages** to promote a healthy lifestyle for all athletes

KEY OBJECTIVES

Sports practices serve as a catalyst for fitness and healthy lifestyles



- Introduce Minimum "Fit" Practice Standards to Programs and sports coaches
- 40 Programs participate in Fitness Programming in Sport Settings before/after practice (0)
- Develop a recognition system for sports teams implementing increased levels of "Fit" Practice Standards

Competitions provide a healthy and safe environment for athletes to achieve their personal best



- Offer Performance Stations at all Major Games (including World Games and Regional Games) to introduce more Programs to the model and promote a healthy and safe competition experience
- 75 Programs offer Performance Stations
- 50 Programs adopt Healthy Food & Beverage Guidelines
- Fitness and Performance Stations are included in 100% of available Sport Impact Standard and Technical Manuals
- 75% of Performance Stations participants (athletes and coaches) are satisfied with their experience

Key supporters have the knowledge and resources to assist athletes to be healthy and fit



- 55,000 sports coaches trained about fitness
 - 12,000 coaches complete the Fitness for the Sport Coach eLearning (1,584 YTD / 6,199 all time)
- 900 Fitness Captains trained to promote fitness in sports settings (150)
- 100% of updated coaching guides include a section on sport-specific fitness (100%)
- 5,000 volunteers trained as Fitness Coaches (1,432 YTD / 5,101 all time)
- Develop a series of resources for families/caregivers about fitness for sports performance

STRATEGIC DRIVERS

Drivers are the tools used to support the work explained in our strategic goals.

Athletes and coaches **utilize data** to drive personal improvement

- Athletes complete fitness assessments and changes in results are monitored
- Injury and competition results are collected and analyzed to make programmatic improvements
- Physical activity levels are monitored at sports practice

Members across the movement **spread messages** to promote a healthy lifestyle for all athletes

- Engagement of Fitness through Sport content including resources and social posts is monitored
- Global Ambassadors are engaged in the promotion of fitness
- Partnership agreements recognize and support Fitness through Sport initiatives and opportunities

GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION



GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- **Minimum "Fit" Practice Standards** defines the components that should be included in every sports practice. These can be led by coaches, or other key leaders like Fitness Captains.
 - Recognition system for teams going beyond the standards will be developed.
- **Fitness Programming in Sport Settings** refers to guidelines to count fitness programming in the sport setting. Program examples can be found in the Fitness Implementation Guidelines.

GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Minimum "Fit" Practice Standards

- 5 minute warm-up with dynamic stretches
- 5 minute cool-down with static stretches
- Conditioning integrated into practice
- Encouragement to be active and healthy outside of practice
- Focus on active practice
- Water breaks every 15-20 minutes
- Healthy foods encouraged at team functions, including field of play

Fitness Programming in Sport Settings

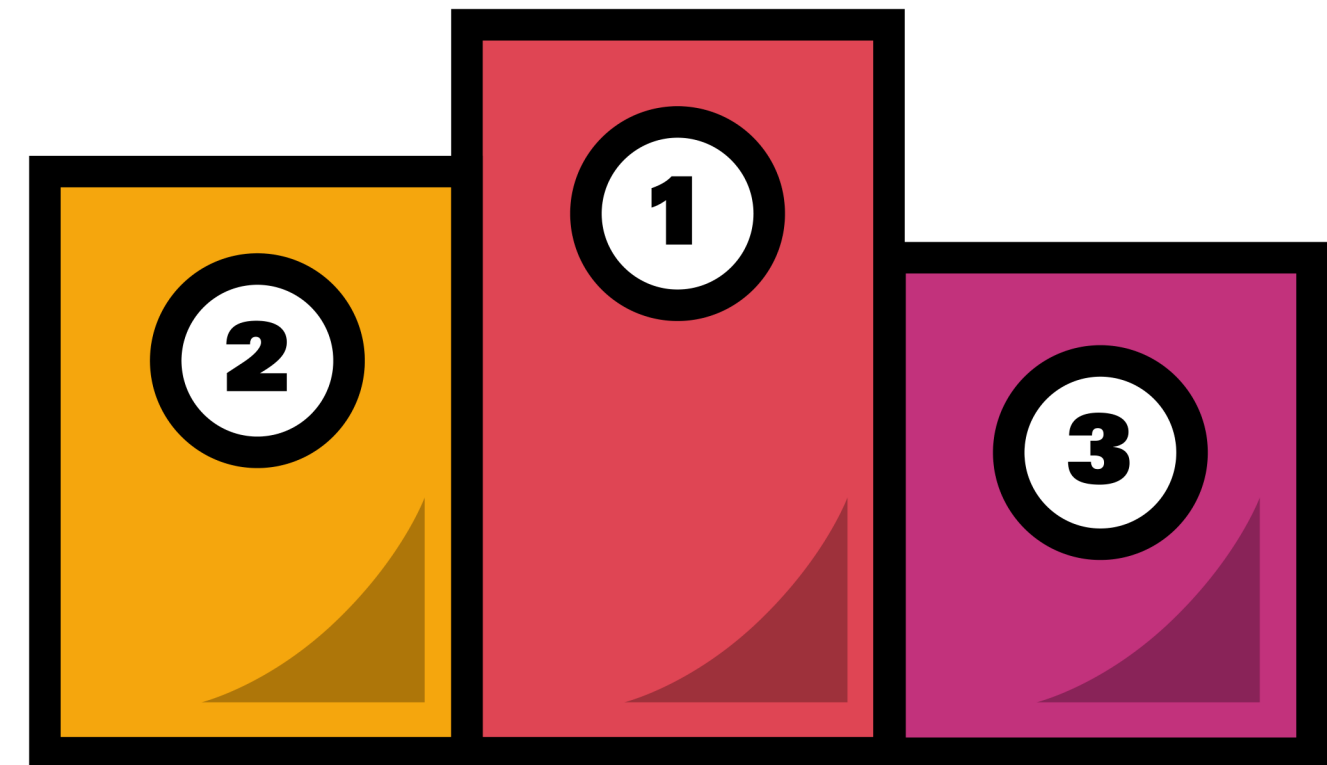
- Programming should:
 - Take place before or after a sports practice
 - Be at least 15 minutes long, 6+ weeks
 - Integrates physical activity, nutrition and hydration
- Following Minimum "Fit" Practice Standards does not count as fitness programming
- Some components can be virtual, such as an additional Zoom session and/or step challenge

COACH RECOGNITION SYSTEM

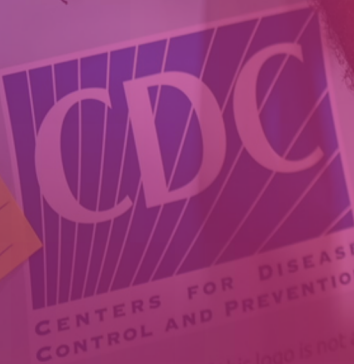
Coming 2024

A recognition system for sports teams implementing increased levels of "Fit" Practice Standards, such as:

- Conducting fitness assessments
- Fitness Captains integrated in team
- Sport-specific conditioning
- Health Tips shared during practice
- Coach completing fitness training



RESOURCES & CALL TO ACTION



Health
Foundation
Colisano

flexibility

Use of this logo is not an
enterprise.

I pledge to
support and
cheer on my
teammates.

FRANK

Sergio

I pledge to
be fit and
healthy.

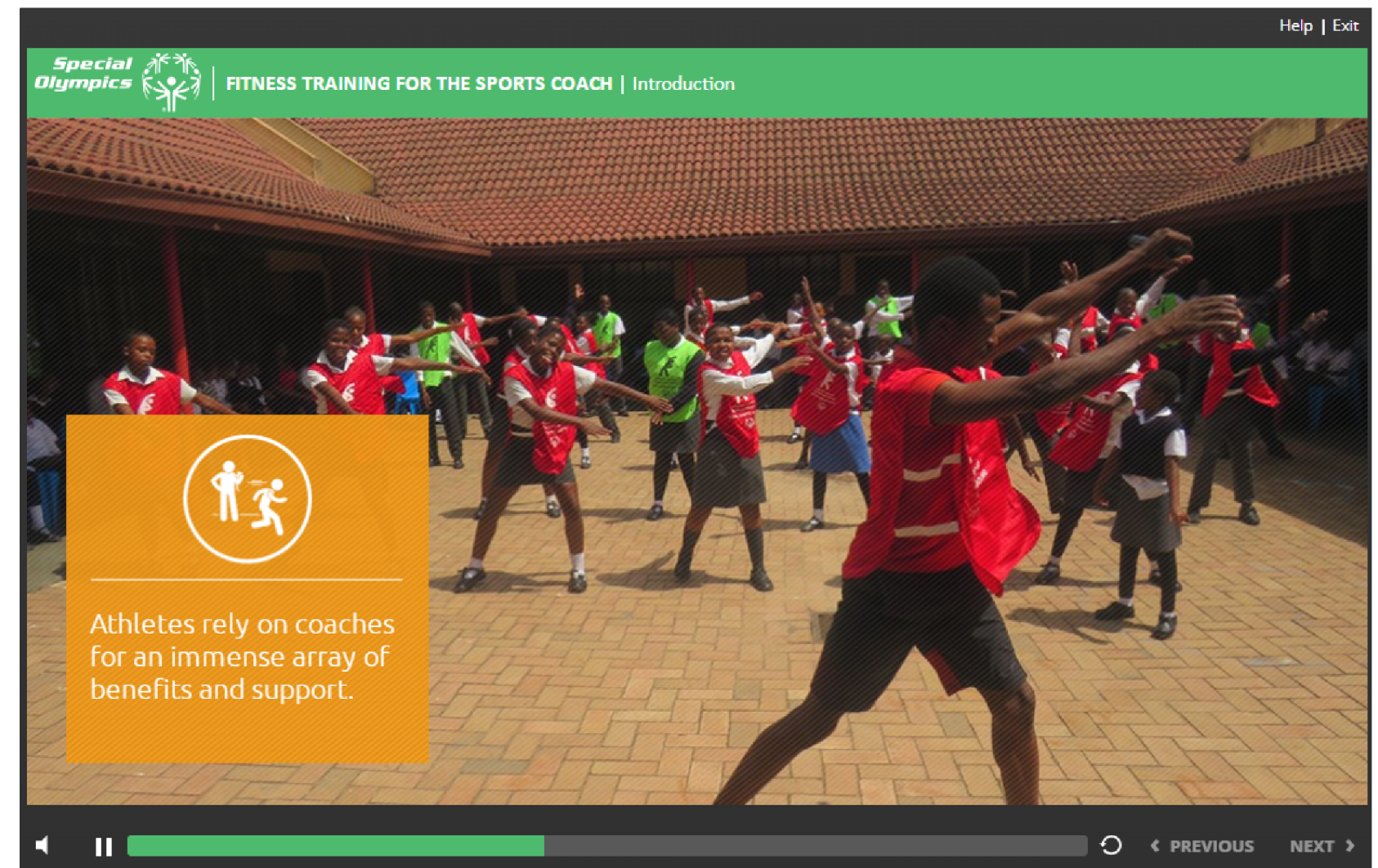
I pledge to
be fit and
healthy.

FITNESS FOR SPORT COACHES

75% of coaches surveyed wanted more training on health and fitness!

Resources for training coaches:

- Fitness for the Sports Coach eLearning
- Coach Educator presentation materials
- Active Practice Guide
- Sample Fit Practice and Practice Organizer
- Injury Prevention Tips
- SO Sport Coaching Guides
- Sport-Specific Warm-Up/Cool-Down Guides and Videos
- **Coming soon...**
 - Sports Nutrition eLearning
 - FTS Toolkit for Coaches



FITNESS COACHES

Fitness Coaches are health and fitness professionals that support health and fitness at sports practice.

The Fitness Coach online training:

- Provides basic understanding on working with athletes with ID
- Explain the role of a fitness coach
- Allows for flexibility in how you can activate these volunteers

Special Olympics | FITNESS COACH TRAINING Introduction | Menu | Resources | Help | Notes | Exit | 01 of 31

This educational module is designed to assist you in:

- gaining an understanding of the Fitness Coach role
- providing some useful information about:
 - intellectual disabilities
 - the health and fitness of individuals with intellectual disabilities
 - some basic strategies for promoting fitness among our athletes

Click Next to proceed.

PREVIOUS NEXT

FITNESS CAPTAINS

- Fitness Captains are athlete leaders on a sports team who lead their team in activities related to fitness and a healthy lifestyle
- Our newest Special Olympics Athlete Leadership position!



FITNESS CAPTAINS

Fitness Captains will work closely with their coaches to make sure health and fitness is a key component of the sports experience by participating in these leadership roles:



Teaching
Healthy Habits



Leading Warm-Ups
and Cool-Downs

FITNESS PROGRAMMING

Fitness programming before/after sports practice can be counted toward your overall fitness programming numbers in the census!

Fitness programming must be at least 15 minutes and meet other criteria in the census.



PERFORMANCE STATIONS

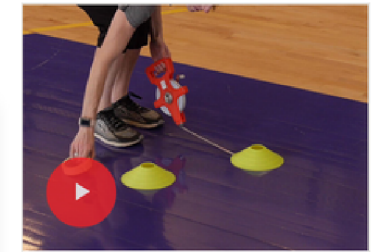
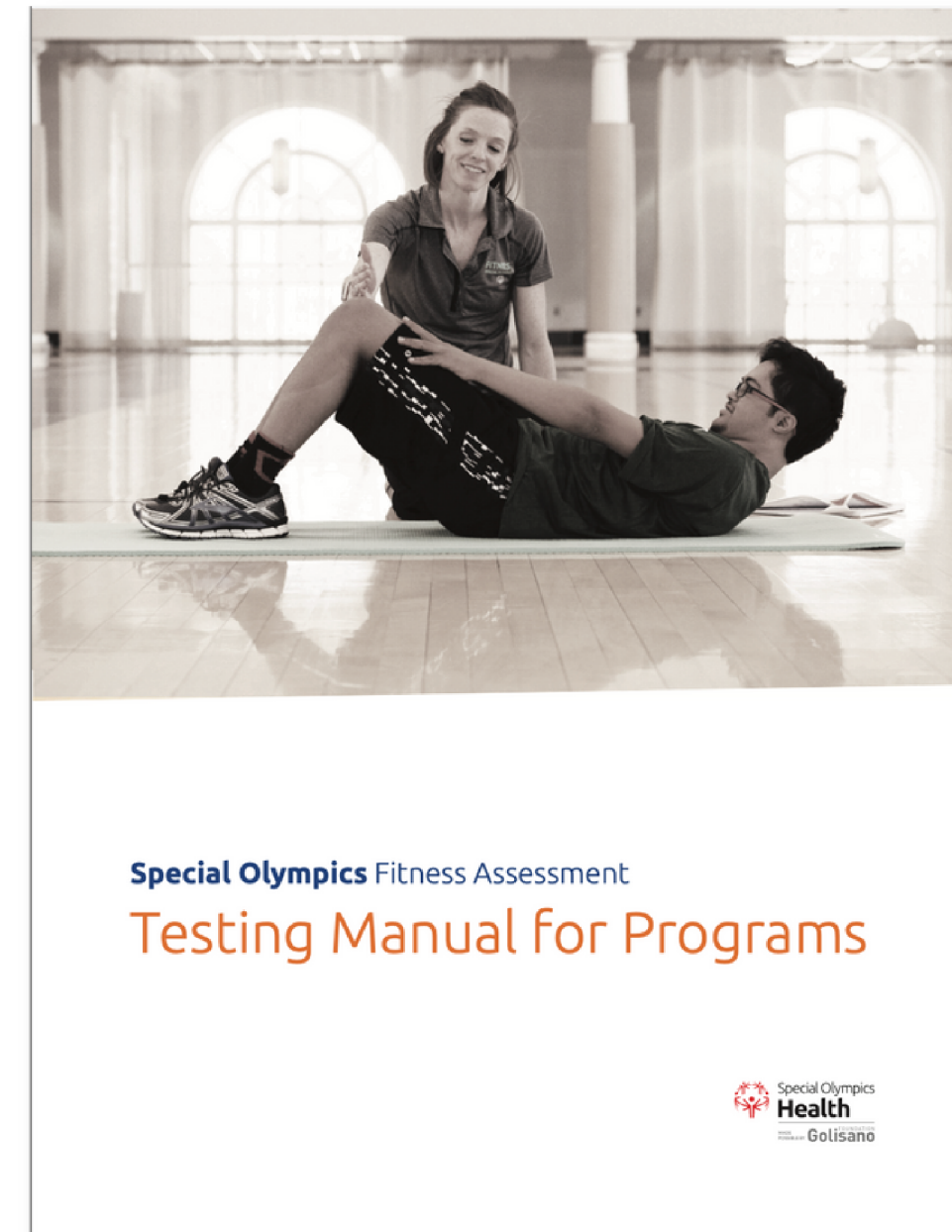
Performance Stations are events held at or near the field of play at tournaments/competitions or Games that are designed to educate and activate athletes and their supporters in the tenets of fitness: nutrition, hydration and physical activity.



FITNESS ASSESSMENTS

Fitness testing is a way to show athletes that they are making measurable progress in a way that impacts both sport performance and overall health.

- This Testing Manual and videos can be used to select, administer and record fitness assessments.
- We will create guidance on using Fitness Assessment results, including information on interpreting the data, goal setting, and measuring changes in results over time.



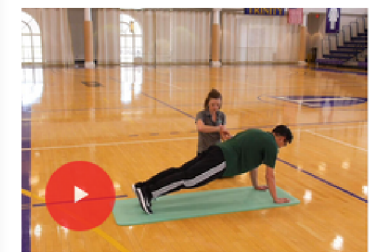
6-Minute Walk Test

4:07



Standing Long Jump

2:34



Isometric Push-Up Test

2:07

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY

- 1 Train Coaches, Fitness Captains, and Fitness Professionals
- 2 Adopt Minimum "Fit" Practice Standards
- 3 Implement fitness programming before/after sports practice
- 4 Offer Performance Stations at competitions
- 5 Collect fitness assessment data
- 6 Stay connected for new resources

QUESTIONS?

