Special Olympics athletes aim to achieve their personal best on and off the playing field. Head Coaches support their athletes’ efforts but are sometimes limited in time and training. A “Fitness Coach” is a volunteer role for fitness professionals or upper-level undergraduate/graduate students who can support a team through the tenets of fitness: nutrition, hydration, and physical activity. A Fitness Coach can work with a Head Coach to ensure that fitness is a part of every practice, competition, and off-season. Head Coaches are highly encouraged to identify an individual to serve in this role to support them in their efforts to optimize athlete performance and health through fitness.

**Types of professionals/students to recruit for the fitness coach role:**

* Certified Personal Trainers
* Certified Group Exercise Instructors
* Dieticians/Nutritionists
* Strength and Conditioning Coaches
* Upper-level undergraduate or students under the supervision of a professor in fitness-related fields (exercise science, kinesiology, adapted physical education/activity, nutrition, physical therapy, dietetics, etc.)

**Possible Roles and Responsibilities:**

The roles and responsibilities of the Fitness Coach will vary depending on the expertise of the individual and the needs of the team. See the sample job description on the back of this sheet for ideas.

**Finding the right volunteer:**

Because of the wide range of professionals that can assist in this role, finding a volunteer who can be a Fitness Coach is easy! Not sure where to look? Follow the steps below to find someone who is the perfect fit for your team.

* Call your local SO Program to see if you already have a partnership with a gym or fitness center. Professionals working at those locations may already be familiar with the needs of Special Olympics athletes.
* Ask around at gyms or fitness centers in your community, as well as the local health department and recreation centers, to see if they will send out the job description to their employees.
* Post the position in the volunteer section on a neighborhood website.
* Contact the Chairperson of exercise science, kinesiology, adapted physical education/activity, physical therapy, and/or dietetic/nutrition departments at your local universities and request that they send the position out to their students. Or, drop off a hard copy of the position description to the department and ask them to post it.
* Visit the website of fitness and nutrition certifying bodies (American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), American Council on Exercise (ACE), National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA), Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND), etc.). They often have a way to send opportunities to people in your area.

**Sample Job Description**

**Position Title:** Fitness Coach for Special Olympics athletes – Volunteer Position

**Purpose:** Centerville area Special Olympics is seeking a volunteer Fitness Coach to assist the floor hockey team to incorporate the tenets of fitness (physical activity, nutrition and hydration) into their training in order to improve their sports performance and live a healthy lifestyle. The Fitness Coach is a professional or upper-level undergraduate/graduate student who will assist the Head Coach in integrating exercises, and encouraging healthy eating and hydration habits during the 8-week sports season.

**Location:** George Washington Recreation Center 123 North Main, Centerville, OH 43210

**Key Responsibilities:** *(edit to fit your needs as a coach)*

* Create a sport-specific warm up and cool down for the team
* Lead field-based fitness assessments
* Work with Head Coach to ensure that conditioning is a seamless part of practice
* Create individual or team workouts for off-days or off-season
* Design individual or team recommended nutrition plans, advise for snacks pre- and post-competition
* Communicate fitness-related information to athletes and their family members/caregivers at the start and throughout the season
* Develop an injury prevention plan
* Work with the team to encourage Fit 5 goals or create more specific goals for nutrition, hydration, and physical activity

**Time Commitment:** During Wednesday practices from 6:00-7:30 pm from January 10 - March 3, 2019. Any additional time as available by the Fitness Coach for non-practice times.

**Qualifications: Volunteers for this position will have advanced training in areas of fitness. Experience working with individuals with intellectual disabilities is an asset but not required. Some examples are:**

* Certified Personal Trainers
* Certified Group Exercise Instructors
* Dieticians
* Strength and Conditioning Coaches
* Students under the supervision of a professor in fitness-related fields (exercise science, kinesiology, adapted physical education/activity, nutrition, physical therapy, dietetics, etc.)