

# FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK GUIDE



***Special Olympics***



## **FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK**

### **A PROJECT MANAGEMENT GUIDE**

November 2002, v.1

The Family Support Network is funded through the generous contributions of Kim Samuel-Johnson and the Samuel Family Foundation.

## GLOBAL ATHLETE MESSENGER

### ÁLVARO MIRANDA

#### **Statement:**

Family is important for the athlete to make him or her stronger. If the athlete does not have the support from his or her family their performance may not be the same because the athlete's primary motivation comes from the family's involvement. It is the Family who takes charge of transportation, celebrate competitions and provide fund-raising support. Families are the engine of Special Olympics.



Special Olympics Peru

Special Olympics Latin America Region

*Age:* 28

*Hometown:* Lima, Peru

*Special Olympics sports:* Aquatics, floor hockey and athletics

*Years involved in Special Olympics:* 14

*International Global Messenger 2002 -2004*

*Special Olympics Platform:*

Álvaro Miranda plans to use his term as an International Global Messenger to recruit more families, especially fathers, to support their athletes. He also wants to promote Special Olympics athletes becoming members of the Board of Directors. He has been a board member with Special Olympics Peru for two years and would like to share his experiences with other athletes and Special Olympics leaders, educating them about how to capitalize on the experience athletes bring to the Boards.

#### **Biography:**

Álvaro Miranda first joined Special Olympics in 1988 as a swimmer. Soon he began actively training in floor hockey and athletics, excelling in the 50m and 100m dash. His floor hockey team won the gold medal at the 1993 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Schladming, Austria. He is a Member of the Board of Directors for Special Olympics Peru and participates in many voluntary committees. Last year, he attended the Latin American Regional Athlete Congress in Puerto Rico. When not training, Miranda works at West Coast Video and takes classes in English and Oration. Miranda's mother is the Family Director for Special Olympics Peru and together they are active in the Special Olympics Family Messenger program.



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Special Olympics Canada

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Special Olympics Regional Family Staff

Special Olympics Organizational Development Staff

Carol Boland

### **Special Olympics Family Support Network Pilot Programs:**

Special Olympics Uganda  
Edward Babumba, Board Member

Special Olympics Peru  
Wilma Miranda Sousa, Family Messenger  
Magdalena Gomez de la Torre, Family Support Network Coordinator

Special Olympics Chinese Taipei  
Charlie Chyun-Maan Chang,  
National Director, Special Olympics

Special Olympics Colorado  
Leah Huffer, Training & Outreach Coordinator  
Sandra "Sam" Hembd, Family Support Network Coordinator

Special Olympics Ireland  
Patricia Hickey, Families Chairperson,  
Family Support Network Coordinator  
Valerie Davison, Family Support  
Network Coordinator, Family Committee

Special Olympics Ontario  
Teresa Kolodziej, Family Support Network Coordinator  
Gail Martin, Family Messenger

Special Olympics Atlantique (France)  
Stephane Garcia, Sports Director  
Alain Deletoille, Program Director



## **HOW TO USE THIS GUIDEBOOK**

This Family Support Network (FSN) Guide was developed based on information from the Final Report of the Family Support Network Pilot Project. A copy of the Final Report is available on the Special Olympics web site ([www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org)).

This document is intended to serve as a working project management guide and is divided into three sections and a workbook:.

### **I. Introduction**

### **II. Project Implementation**

- Steps for Establishing a Family Support Network
- Components

### **III. Resources**

- Web Sites



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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **Project Philosophy**

*The Family Support Network is based on the premise that family members of Special Olympics athletes are valuable and have an important role to play in Special Olympics outreach. Today, thousands of family members of Special Olympics athletes serve as key leaders and sources of support for one another as they attend training, competitions, meetings and other activities together.*

Patricia Hickey, a Family Leader for Special Olympics Ireland, has this to say about her involvement as a family member and a Family Support Network participant:

*Through my sons...I have learned what is important in life.*

*Through my sons...I have made wonderful friends who see me for what I am.*

*Through my sons...I have become part of the Special Olympics Family Support Network which allows me to give support to others in a similar situation.*

*Through my sons...I feel that I am making a contribution to society.*

*Through my sons...I have been blessed.*

### **Project Background**

Special Olympics families refers to a husband, wife, partner of an athlete, a blood relative of the athlete (mother, father, child, sister, brother, grandparent, aunt), an individual who serves as the athlete's legal guardian, foster parent, or a caregiver.

The Family Support Network is an organized project whereby a Special Olympics Program conducts outreach to families unfamiliar with Special Olympics by developing partnerships with existing community organizations and by training Family Messengers to become leaders and spokespeople for the Special Olympics Program.

The Family Support Network is modeled after Parent to Parent, an international grass-roots outreach model that provides support to parents of children with disabilities. In this model, experienced or "veteran" Special Olympics family members (Family Messengers) are systematically matched with parents new to Special Olympics who are seeking information and support from a peer.



**Project Goals and Objectives**

The Primary goals are to reach new families and recruit new athletes.

**ANNUAL OBJECTIVES OF THE FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK**

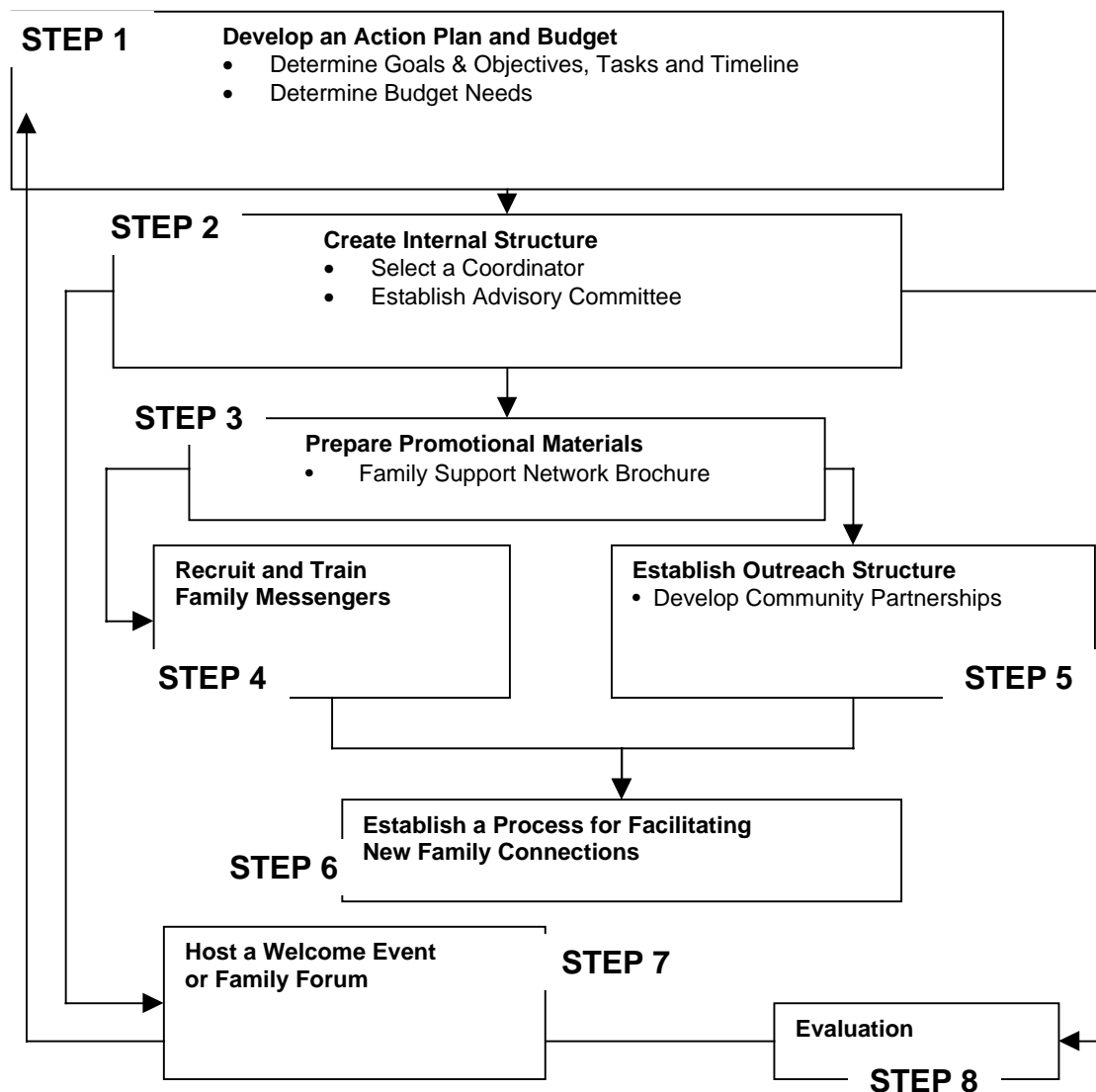
- 1) Designate at least one individual who will serve as **Coordinator** of the Family Support Network; ideally, this person should be a family member and should serve in the role a minimum of 15 hours per month.
- 2) Develop a network of relationships with 8-10 **“Community Partners”** who will serve as referral sources for new families.
- 3) Develop a set of outreach materials tailored for families, including a family brochure and a **“Family Welcome Package.”**
- 4) Train ten (10) family members of existing athletes as **Family Messengers**.
- 5) Each Family Messenger will make a telephone or in-person **“Family Connection”** with at least five (5) families who are new to Special Olympics.
- 6) Host a **“Welcome Event”** for new families and their Family Messengers or a **Family Forum** (or both).





### The Family Support Network Flowchart

The successful implementation of this project takes into consideration a careful balance of relationships, processes and results. The flowchart below provides a recommended order of steps and demonstrates the relationships. The next section reviews each component of the flowchart, provides suggestions for implementation and recommends templates for use which can be found in the Family Support Network Workbook.





## **I. STEPS FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

*This Project Management Guide is designed to be used in conjunction with the Family Support Network Workbook. Refer to the Workbook as you review this Guide. The worksheets in the Workbook can be used to help you as you plan for implementation of your Family Support Network.*

### **Step 1. Develop an Action Plan and Budget**

#### **Action Plan**

A key essential for success is to develop a detailed action plan for guidance. Before you get started with your action plan, refer to Worksheets 2 and 3 in the Workbook, where you will find questions and other information to help you prepare your action plan template.

- The most detailed emphasis should be placed on the first year of the project; however, it is a good idea to develop at least a three-year plan to account for long-term goals.
- The final action plan should be evaluated and revised yearly.
- Given the scope of the Family Support Network, it should take approximately one year before the project begins to mature.
- It is critical that the Family Support Network project plans be integrated into overall planning for the Special Olympics Program.

Worksheet 4 is an action plan template that will ask you to include:

- Goals and objectives;
- Time needed to carry out the objectives;
- Action steps for each objective;
- Staffing support required; and
- Money required to carry out the action steps.

**Note: You should work closely with your Special Olympics Program Director.**

#### **Budget Plan**

In addition to the planning documents, a detailed budget should be prepared prior to initiating the project. Worksheet 5 provides a budget template. (Information from this worksheet will be included in the Family Support Network Seed Grant Application if you choose to apply.)

Expect that the majority of your budget will go toward:

- Outreach materials;
- Supporting events such as the Family Messenger Training sessions;
- Educational and/or social events for new families; and
- Family Forums.



## **Step 2. Create an Internal Structure**

### **Family Support Network Coordinator**

The Family Support Network requires at least one dedicated Coordinator selected to support the activities. Ideally, this person should be a family member; however, this person could be a paid staff person or a volunteer working in conjunction with a family member or the Family Support Network Advisory Committee.

For at least the first year, the Coordinator will need to devote as many as 15 or more hours per month to the project. (After the first year, some of the Coordinators duties will naturally be carried out by the Family Messengers.)

*It is extremely important that the Family Support Network be an integral part of the Special Olympics Program. Communication with the Program Director about the needs, progress and accomplishments of the Family Support Network should occur frequently.*

### **Establish a Family Advisory Committee**

The Family Advisory Committee can assist in planning the project from the beginning and assessing it over time. Advisors should include individuals with a diverse array of skills and expertise. They should include the following types of individuals:

- A Special Olympics athlete;
- The Family Support Network Coordinator;
- At least one Family Messenger;
- A Special Olympics Board Member, Program Director or other designated Special Olympics staff member; and
- Representatives from community organizations serving the same population.



### **Step 3. Prepare Promotional Materials**

#### **Family Support Network Brochure**

Before you contact potential Community Partners, it is important to have written materials to give to them. A Family Support Network brochure should define the mission of Special Olympics, the goals of your Family Support Network project and how they relate to your overall Special Olympics Program. Visit the Special Olympics Web site ([www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org)) to download a Family Support Network brochure template.

The primary target audience for your brochure should be:

- New parents;
- Family members of potential athletes;
- Potential Community Partners.

**Note: Often, the Special Olympics general information brochure is too generic for families and does not always address their needs.**

Your brochure should parallel the look of the overall Special Olympics Program and should be very simple. In developing your brochure, consider including the following:

- Information about the Special Olympics Program;
- Goals and objectives of the Family Support Network project;
- Invitation to speak with a Family Messenger;
- Contact telephone number for the Family Support Network project;
- Tear-off postcard for new family members to mail to the Special Olympics Program
- Frequently Asked Questions;
- Photographs of Family Messengers and athletes; and
- Testimony from a Family Messenger.

#### **Family Welcome Package**

A key component to conducting outreach to new families is providing them with information packaged in a way that truly interests families. The Family Welcome Package can be an important tool for Family Messengers who want to provide new families with helpful and supportive information. The Family Welcome Package could include:

- Family Support Network brochure;
- An introductory letter from a Family Messenger and/or the Special Olympics Family Support Network Program Coordinator;
- An overview of your Special Olympics Program, including specific information on the population served by Special Olympics (how an athlete is defined) and eligibility;
- A calendar of your Program's events with an invitation to attend;
- A list of local, national or international resources that may be helpful to new parents (see Section III); and
- Full contact information for the Family Messenger and the Special Olympics Program

In addition, you may want to include basic information about mental disabilities and Special Olympics "gifts" such as a T-shirt, ball, toy or book.



#### **Step 4. Recruitment and Training**

**Family Messengers** are family members of active or potential Special Olympics athletes who have been trained to conduct outreach to new families who are not yet active in Special Olympics.

Because most Programs already have access to existing networks of family members, they are in a unique position to easily begin training Family Messengers. Inviting family members to participate as Family Messengers represents a natural and more formalized extension of their current roles. In general, you should plan to host “new” Family Messenger training sessions at least once a year so that you maintain an active pool of trained Family Messengers.

#### **Family Messenger Position Description**

Before approaching potential Family Messengers, you should devise a very specific Family Messenger position description. Position descriptions should include at least the following:

- Time commitment expected by month and over what period of time;
- Good description of the Family Support Network and the specific role of the Family Messenger, including what the Family Messenger is *NOT* responsible for (for example: counseling, support other than information or emotional support, etc.);
- Information you will ask Family Messengers to collect on a regular basis; and
- A statement about the expectation that information shared between the Family Messenger and new family contacts is to remain *confidential*.

Worksheet 6 in the Family Support Network Workbook provides a sample position description.

#### **Recruiting Family Messengers**

There are at least two important things to remember when recruiting Family Messengers:

- Family Messengers should be family members of participating Special Olympics athletes or potential new athletes.
- Not all the family members you recruit will be suited to become Family Messengers.

You should plan to recruit enough individuals to serve as Family Messengers so that you end up with a core group of at least 10 trained Family Messengers.

Worksheet 7 in the Family Support Network Workbook provides a Sample Family Messenger Recruitment letter.

Here are some examples of strategies for recruiting potential Family Messengers:

- Post information on the Internet (on your Web site if you have one) and in your Program newsletter.
- Global Athlete Messengers can support recruitment.
- Talk to parents and family members who attend trainings and competitions.
- Develop an informative handout or letter for potential Family Messengers that describes the Family Support Network and the need for “experienced” Family Messengers (see Worksheet 5 in the Family Support Network Workbook).
- Try to recruit Family Messengers as they transport their athletes to and from Special Olympics events.
- Consider hosting a Family Messenger interest session where you can invite potential Family Messengers, explain the project and answer any questions they may have.
- Explain the Family Support Network project to coaches, area directors and local coordinators and ask them to talk to parents and family members about becoming Family Messengers.



It is important to recruit a diverse group of Family Messengers so that you have sufficient matches with new families who are referred to the project. Important areas of diversity include:

- Age (particularly of the family member with the mental disability);
- Type of family member (mothers, fathers, siblings, etc.);
- Ethnicity;
- Type of disability ;
- Geographic locations; and
- Socioeconomic level.

### **Screening Potential Family Messengers**

As with any volunteer, it is important to establish a screening process for accepting Family Messengers. Although you may be inclined to accept any family member as a Family Messenger, it is important to be aware that not all family members will make good Family Messengers. Set guidelines for the characteristics of a good Family Messenger and inform potential Family Messengers that you will only be choosing a certain number of the most qualified family members to serve in the role. A good Family Messenger is someone who:

- Has a strong knowledge of Special Olympics and its mission or is willing to learn;
- Has maturity and empathy;
- Has good listening and communication skills;
- Is willing to share his or her family story with others;
- Has accepted his or her family member with a mental disability and has adjusted to the family situation;
- Has an ability to cope with other people's problems;
- Has strong tolerance for others; and
- Has sufficient time available to devote to the project.

Worksheet 8 in the Family Support Network Workbook provides a sample screening guide. Potential Family Messengers can be screened during an in-person introductory session among a group of family members, over the telephone or in a formal one-on-one interview.

### **Training**

All Family Messengers should attend a Special Olympics Family Messenger Training Session. By participating in a quality training program, all your Family Messengers will receive the same foundation of information and you can be assured that they, in turn, will deliver consistent messages to new families and the community.

At least two central objectives should guide your Family Messenger Training Session:

- Provide opportunities for Family Messengers to examine their own values and practice listening and communication skills; and
- Equip Family Messengers with information they will need to pass on to new families, including information about the Special Olympics Program and information about community resources for persons with mental disabilities.

The format of the training and the size of the group will vary from community to community. Generally, training should be provided to groups of about 15 people. This group size is small enough to foster comradeship and intimacy, but large enough to stimulate the sharing of diverse backgrounds and ideas.

In order to conduct the best training session possible, a group facilitator should conduct the training. The training should include:

- Time to share family stories;



- Orientation to Special Olympics, its mission and the Program (and how Family Messengers should talk about the Program);
- Orientation to the Family Support Network, including goals and objectives;
- Discussion of the role/responsibilities of the Family Messenger;
- Listening and communication skills;
- Information on community resources for persons with mental disabilities;
- The process of making referrals and matches between Family Messengers and new families;
- Who is responsible for the costs associated with Family Connections;
- Expectation for maintaining and sharing information with the Family Support Network Coordinator; and
- An evaluation of the training.

The key skill when developing a successful Family Messenger is to provide them with the best communication abilities so that they may be able to develop connections with new family members.

Family Messengers will need to understand that new families will have a broad range of motivations for contacting the Family Support Network. Some will want to discuss Special Olympics specifically and others will want to simply talk to the Family Messenger about current challenges in their lives. Still others may wish to discuss only the family member with the mental disability and strategies for meeting their needs.

*It cannot be emphasized enough that Family Messengers should not view themselves as experts or counselors and they should not expect to have all the answers to questions posed by new families.*

Every effort should be made to serve only as a listener and to share one's own family story. Family Messengers should not give "advice" or provide more support to new families other than simply listening and talking.

Worksheet 9 in the Family Support Network Workbook will provide you with a sample agenda for a Family Messenger Training Session and Worksheet 10 will demonstrate a sample story for a listening exercise.

### **Re-Training or Follow-Up Meetings of Family Messengers**

Once Family Messengers are trained, re-training or follow-up meetings should be provided as needed. Obviously, is important to maintain regular, frequent contact with Family Messengers after they are trained and being matched with a new family. As Family Messengers become more experienced and comfortable in their role, the meetings could be less frequent. Family Messengers will want to come together again to share their experiences and possibly receive training in certain key areas. This is an opportunity to train some Family Messengers to become trainers themselves and help conduct future training sessions for new Family Messengers.

Worksheet 11 will support tracking of trained Family Messenger data.



### **Step 5. Establishing an Outreach Structure**

The purpose of establishing an outreach structure is to develop a formalized structure for conducting outreach to new families in the community (who do not currently have athletes participating in Special Olympics). One of the key components of your outreach structure is to establish links with organizations in the community serving families and persons with mental disabilities referred to as Community Partners. Your promotional materials (Step 3) are also a part of your outreach structure.

#### **Identifying Community Partners**

Try to locate a directory of organizations serving families/individuals with mental disabilities in your area. In Section III, Resources (pages 22-23), you will find a listing of organizations and their Web sites which may help. Also, State/Provincial/National government offices usually have a directory of organizations serving persons with mental disabilities. Consider the following types of organizations as possible places to develop community partnerships:

- Hospitals
- Disability organizations
- Schools
- Institutions
- Service organizations
- Parks & recreational departments
- Early childhood programs
- Military organizations/bases
- Advocacy organizations
- Church or civic organizations
- Doctors' offices
- Parent groups
- Government organizations
- Youth organizations
- Service organizations

The most appropriate organizations are those serving families of individuals with mental disabilities in the age range you have identified and in the geographic area you are targeting.

**Note: Keep in mind that it is sometimes more difficult to market your FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK (and your Special Olympics Program) in geographic areas where a Special Olympics Program has yet to be developed.**

#### **Recommendation for Initiating Contact with Community Partners**

Steps to interaction:

- The FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK Coordinator should first contact the prospective Community Partner organization by telephone to determine whether it is an appropriate organization for the project and to identify a key contact person at the organization.
- The Coordinator should arrange an in-person visit to explain the FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK project in more detail and provide written materials.

The in-person visit is critical to establishing a more personal relationship and displaying commitment to the project. During this visit, Family Support Network Coordinators should do the following:

- Clearly explain the mission of Special Olympics and goals of the Family Support Network.
- Present a list of clear expectations for what you would like the Community Partner to do.
- Provide each Community Partner with materials that they, in turn, can distribute to family members.
- Establish a regularly scheduled meeting with the contact person in order to check in on progress and address concerns or issues once a month or once every other month.
- Present a clear list of benefits the Community Partner will receive.

Multiple visits may be necessary when developing the relationship. Also, depending on how formal you wish to be, you may consider signing a joint letter of understanding with the Community Partner so that both Special Olympics and the partner organizations understand their roles in the partnership.

Once Family Messengers are trained, it may be possible to match them with the Community Partners so they can then serve as the primary liaison for the Family Support Network.





### **Maintaining and Tracking Contact with Community Partners**

Remember that it takes time to build a trusting relationship with each Community Partner. The personal links you establish with the contact person from each organization will be your best asset as you build your relationship. Ideally, you want to remain in contact with each of your contact persons on a consistent basis, either monthly or every other month.

**Note: Follow-up contacts can be made either face-to-face or by telephone. Mail or e-mail is not as personal as a telephone conversation.**

Other possible suggestions to enhance connections with Community Partners include:

- Invite your contact people to Special Olympics events (and you can attend their events).
- Share resources and information between Special Olympics and the Community Partner organization (for example, in return for handing out Family Support Network materials, you may agree to hand out their materials at your events).
- Share expertise by conducting presentations at each other's events and conferences.

Worksheet 12 in the Family Support Network Workbook will help you with your Community Partner record keeping.

**Step 6. Establish a Process for Facilitating New Family Connections**

Once you have established your outreach structure for the Family Support Network and the Family Messengers are trained and ready to be matched with new family members, you should begin to get referrals from new families and make "Family Connections" between each new family member and a Family Messenger. This will require some record keeping. A sample template can be found on Worksheet 13 in the Family Support Network Workbook.

**Basic Information and Record keeping**

Referrals of new family members to your Family Support Network project will, more than likely, come from a variety of sources:

- Information in a newspaper;
- Word-of-mouth;
- Your Program's Web site;
- Directly from your Community Partner organizations; or
- Through your Family Messengers.

Regardless of how the information comes to you initially, you will need to set up an organized system, called a Referral and Information System. This will guide:

- How referrals from new family members are received;
- How information you collect regarding each new Family Connection is maintained;
- What information/materials new families will receive; and
- Who will contact new family members.

**Collecting Basic Information from New Family Members**

The Family Support Network Coordinator may be responsible for initial contacts with new family members. That way, the Coordinator can explain the purpose of the project, determine the needs of the new family member and collect information on a confidential basis. Once the new family member expresses interest in being contacted by a Family Messenger, the Coordinator should collect basic information from the family.

If your Program already has a families database, be sure to ask for all of the relevant information for both the Family Support Network tracking purposes and the database. This may also be an opportunity for you to create a families database if you do not already have one.

In the course of the initial contact, new families must be informed of the following:

- Information they provide will be kept strictly confidential
- Every effort will be made to match them with a Family Messenger who has experienced a similar situation.
- Although Family Messengers are not experts, they will serve as listeners and supporters as needed.
- They are not obligated to register their family member for Special Olympics, but will be invited to do so.

**Note: Confidentiality is a very important issue that deserves more clarification.**

Any information that is collected from new family members (or Family Messengers) must be kept strictly confidential. One method of maintaining confidentiality is to assign an identification number to each family member and list only identification numbers on all documents. Then, in a separate file/location, record which identification numbers are linked to which family members. Obviously, you will want to share information collected from new families with the Family Messenger to whom they are matched. However, you must first ask the new family member if you can share their information, at the same time assuring them that the Family Messenger is aware of the confidentiality rules.



### **Matching New Families with Family Messengers**

Research has shown that new parents benefit most from being connected with experienced parents who are similar to them. The matching criteria listed below are the most important and should be used when matching families:

- Type/level of disability of the family member with a mental disability;
- Experience with past or present age of the family member; and
- Geographic proximity of the Family Messenger to the new family.

Once the Family Support Network Coordinator determines the most appropriate Family Messenger for a particular new family member, the Coordinator should then contact the Family Messenger and provide them with pertinent information about a new family member. The Family Messenger would then contact the new parent, usually by telephone initially, and preferably within 24 hours of the time the referral first came to the Program. Make sure to set up a reasonable timeframe for your project and communicate it to the Family Messenger and the new family member.

When you are just starting your Family Support Network project, it may be difficult to establish the most appropriate matches between new families and Family Messengers because you will have a limited pool of Family Messengers. However, over time, as you build a pool of Family Messengers, you will have an easier time making matches. Geographic proximity may be the most reasonable matching criteria to use initially because you want to foster the development of person-to-person relationships and this is easier the closer you live to someone else. In the matching process, you want to inform both new families and Family Messengers that they should feel free to contact you in the event that they feel another match would be more appropriate.

**Step 7. Host a Welcome Event or Family Forum**

In addition to inviting new families to Special Olympics competitions, you should consider hosting a separate Welcome Event where Family Messengers and new families can come together in person. Such a Welcome Event can be social or educational in nature, or both.

In general, no matter what type of event you decide to host, you will be most successful if you host your events on a separate day/time from a Special Olympics competition because Family Messengers and other attendees may prefer to watch the athletes compete.

**Welcome Event**

When planning your Welcome Event, consider the following:

- Will your Welcome Event be purely social in nature or will you invite speakers on educational topics of interest?
- How long after you establish your Family Support Network project will you host your Welcome Event?
- Will you invite representatives from your Community Partner organizations?
- Who from your Special Olympics organization will you invite?
- Will you invite entire families or just the Family Messengers and the new family member (inviting entire families will be more costly but may be more rewarding in the long run).
- Be sure to evaluate your event, providing evaluation forms for families to complete. Keep good records of attendees so you can report on the success of your event and keep in touch with the attendees.

**Note: At any Welcome Event you have, whether it is social or educational in nature, you should include a brief presentation on your Special Olympics Program, possibly conducted by a Family Messenger, an athlete or both.**

**Social** events can range from a coffee hour, to a potluck supper, to a picnic or barbecue, to an overnight Family Camp. The emphasis should be on “fun.” As you are planning your event, be sure to include games and activities that foster sharing and getting to know one another.

**Educational** events offer families an opportunity to gather information they will find useful. While hosting an educational event may take a bit more planning and organization, families will appreciate the effort. Families may be more motivated to attend an event if they know they will learn something. Consider collaborating with one of your Community Partners to host this event—they may have good links with potential speakers and can invite a larger group of families.

**Combination** events offer something social-educational so that you are meeting the needs of the broadest group of families.

**Hosting a Family Forum**

A Family Forum is different from a Welcome Event in that it provides an opportunity for families to share ideas, experiences and recommendations on a variety of topics related to Special Olympics.

When planning your Family Forum consider the following:

- Will you invite only Family Messengers, or will you invite other family members of athletes and/or the athletes themselves?
- Who will facilitate the Forum? (Special Olympics staff persons, other family members, a professional facilitator?)
- Will you have one open Forum or divide family members into small groups depending on the topics they wish to discuss?



- How do you intend to “follow-up” on advice and information collected during the Forum?

In planning your discussion topics, you should survey Family Messengers/members ahead of time to determine the areas for discussion. Remember that in a Family Forum the emphasis should be placed on what is working and on gathering creative ideas for improvement.

Specific areas for discussion are suggested below:

- Family Outreach
- Athlete Retention
- Schools Outreach
- Transition Years
- Athlete Leadership Programs
- Sports Development
- Divisioning
- Advancement to Higher Levels of Competition

Once the discussion areas are selected, Programs should provide attendees with these topics so they can be better prepared for the discussion. Families could also prepare statements regarding the impact of Special Olympics on their family member which can later be used in promotional materials.

Two meeting styles are generally effective for Family Forums.

**Formal format:** This is characterized by a facilitator who takes comments from the audience and uses them to generate feedback from other audience members. In an open meeting such as this, it is a good idea to have a panel of people in the front of the room to assist facilitating and/or answer questions.

Additional participants could include:

- |                     |            |                 |
|---------------------|------------|-----------------|
| • Family Messengers | • Athletes | • Coaches       |
| • Board Members     | • Parents  | • Staff Members |

Participants should only serve as experts in their areas and answer those specific questions posed by audience members.

**Informal format:** Divide the audience members into sub-groups depending on the topic they wish to discuss. Have them work together and report back to the general session.

After the Forum, you want to be sure that there is follow-up from the meeting. The Forum should not just be a session where family members share ideas that are then forgotten. Possible follow-up can include the following:

- Written report of key conclusions from the Forum;
- Presentation on Forum conclusions at Board Meeting or Annual Conference;
- Formation of sub-committees of family members and staff to address certain issues; or
- Follow-up Forums or an annual Forum.

In order to share the conclusions from the Forum with attendees, contact information for all attendees should be collected, including e-mail addresses. As with all other events, you should include an evaluation component to your Forum, allowing attendees to fill out an evaluation form before they leave.

The Family Messenger Training Session as well as the Welcome Event and Family Forum, should be evaluated to support a positive exchange of ideas and focus on providing services for families.

**Step 8. Performance Measures**

The importance of evaluating the Family Support Network cannot be underestimated. Evaluation provides feedback and will assist all Programs involved in developing more effective Family Support Networks.

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

	<b>Current</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Actual (6 months)</b>	<b>Actual (12 months)</b>
<b>Number of Community/Partner Relationships (list separately)</b>				
<b>Number of Contacts with New Families</b>				
<b>Number of New Families Registered</b>				
<b>Number of New Athletes Registered</b>				
<b>Number of Family Messengers Trained</b>				
<b>Number of Stories and Best Practices Submitted</b>				

To keep your data organized, it is recommended that you maintain separate files for

- 1) Each new Community Partner and subsequent referral from that relationship;
- 2) Each new family member;
- 3) Each new family registered;
- 4) Each new athlete registered through the Family Support Network;
- 5) Each new Family Messenger trained; and
- 6) New Stories and Best Practices.

On a yearly basis, the overall project should be evaluated. To do this, the Family Support Network Coordinator should review the data that has been collected. From this, the Coordinator will be able to assess which Community Partnerships are working effectively (and maybe why some are not), which Family Messengers are actively helping new families and how many new athletes have been recruited.



### III. RESOURCES

#### Websites on Mental Disabilities

There are many resources available for families with members who have mental retardation. Following are a sampling of helpful Web sites. These sites are not owned or operated by Special Olympics.

Administration on Developmental Disabilities U.S. DHHS	<a href="http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ada">www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ada</a>
American Association of University Affiliated Programs	<a href="http://www.aaup.org">www.aaup.org</a>
American Association on Mental Retardation	<a href="http://www.aamr.org">www.aamr.org</a>
The ARC of the U.S.	<a href="http://www.Thearc.org/welcome.html">www.Thearc.org/welcome.html</a>
The Autism Society of America	<a href="http://www.autism-society.org/">www.autism-society.org/</a>
C.A.M.P.- Children's Association for Maximum Potential	<a href="http://www.serve.com/campcamp/">www.serve.com/campcamp/</a>
The Center for Children with Chronic Illness & Disability (Univ. MN)	<a href="http://www.peds.umn.edu/centers">www.peds.umn.edu/centers</a>
Circle of Inclusion	<a href="http://www.circleofinclusion.org">www.circleofinclusion.org</a>
Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)	<a href="http://www.cec.sped.org">www.cec.sped.org</a>
Exceptional Parent Magazine	<a href="http://www.eparent.com">www.eparent.com</a>
Family Village- A Global Community of Disability-Related Resources	<a href="http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu">www.familyvillage.wisc.edu</a>
Family Voices (healthcare issues for children with disabilities)	<a href="http://www.familyvoices.org">www.familyvoices.org</a>
Institute for Special Education (worldwide org based in Switzerland)	<a href="http://pedcurmac13.unifr.ch">http://pedcurmac13.unifr.ch</a>
International Assoc. for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disabilities (IASSID)	<a href="http://www.iasid.wisc.edu">www.iasid.wisc.edu</a>
Mobility International (MIUSA)	<a href="http://www.miusa.org">www.miusa.org</a>
MOVE International	<a href="http://www.move-international.org">www.move-international.org</a>
MUMS: National Parent to Parent Network	<a href="http://www.netnet.net/mums/">www.netnet.net/mums/</a>
National (USA) Association of Developmental Disabilities Councils	<a href="http://www.igc.apc.org/NADD">www.igc.apc.org/NADD</a>
National (USA) Association of the Dually Diagnosed (NADD)	<a href="http://www.thenadd.org">www.thenadd.org</a>
National (USA) Center for Youth with Disabilities	
<a href="http://www.peds.umn.edu/Centers/ihd">www.peds.umn.edu/Centers/ihd</a>	
National (USA) Down Syndrome Congress	<a href="http://www.ndscenter.org">www.ndscenter.org</a>
National (USA) Down Syndrome Society	<a href="http://www.ndss.org">www.ndss.org</a>
National (USA) Family Caregiver Association	<a href="http://www.nfcacares.org">www.nfcacares.org</a>
National (USA) Father's Network	<a href="http://www.fathersnetwork.org">www.fathersnetwork.org</a>
National (USA) Information Center for Children & Youth w/ Disabilities (NICHCY)	<a href="http://www.nichcy.org">www.nichcy.org</a>
National (USA) Institute of Child Health & Human Development (NICHD)	<a href="http://www.nih.gov/nichd">www.nih.gov/nichd</a>
National (USA) Organization on Disability	<a href="http://www.nod.org">www.nod.org</a>
National (USA) Parent Network on Disability	<a href="http://www.npnd.org">www.npnd.org</a>
National (USA) Parent-to-Parent Support & Information Service (also available by state)	
National (USA) Rehabilitation Information Center	<a href="http://www.npsis.org">www.npsis.org</a>
Office of Special Education & Rehabilitation Services: U.S. Dept of Education	<a href="http://www.naric.com/naric">www.naric.com/naric</a>
Parenting Special Needs	<a href="http://www.ed.gov/offices/osers">www.ed.gov/offices/osers</a>
Parents Helping Parents, Inc.	<a href="http://specialchildren.about.com/">http://specialchildren.about.com/</a>
Parent Training & Information Centers- Alliance Coordinating Office	<a href="http://www.php.com">www.php.com</a>
President's Committee on Mental Retardation	<a href="http://www.taalliance.org">www.taalliance.org</a>
Rehabilitation International	202- 619-0634
Rural Institute on Disabilities	<a href="http://www.ri.org">www.ri.org</a>
The Sibling Support Project	<a href="http://www.ruralinstitute.umn.edu">www.ruralinstitute.umn.edu</a>
SNAP: Special Needs Advocate for Parents	<a href="http://www.chmc.org/departmt/sibsupp/">www.chmc.org/departmt/sibsupp/</a>
Special Child Magazine	<a href="http://www.spapinfo.org">www.spapinfo.org</a>
Parenting a Child with Special Needs: -ABC's of Parenting	<a href="http://www.specialchild.com">www.specialchild.com</a>
The Association for Severe Handicaps (TASH)	<a href="http://www.abcparenting.com">www.abcparenting.com</a>
Title V Children with Special Healthcare Needs (CSHCN)	<a href="http://www.tash.org">www.tash.org</a>
United Cerebral Palsy Association	<a href="http://www.ichp.edu">www.ichp.edu</a>
	<a href="http://www.ucpa.org">www.ucpa.org</a>



World Institute on Disability

[www.wid.org](http://www.wid.org)

**Other Down Syndrome Sites:**

Down Syndrome: For New Parents

[www.downsyn.com](http://www.downsyn.com)

Down Syndrome: Health Issues

[www.ds-health.com](http://www.ds-health.com)

Down Syndrome: Understanding the Gift of Life

[www.nas.com/downsyn](http://www.nas.com/downsyn)

**Other Autism Sites:**

Autism (SFTAH) Home page

[www.autismuk.com](http://www.autismuk.com)

One Mom's View of Autism/PDD

[www.challengenet.com/~onemom/](http://www.challengenet.com/~onemom/)

The Son-Rise Program

[www.son-rise.org](http://www.son-rise.org)



## FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK

The Family Support Network provides a programmatic structure in which Special Olympics families reach out to new families to welcome them into the Special Olympics community. Family Support Network objectives—to support families, to develop partnerships with community organizations, to train new Family Leaders—all contribute to Special Olympics' primary goal of increasing the number of athletes participating in the movement worldwide.

[www.family.specialolympics.org](http://www.family.specialolympics.org)  
e-mail: [family@specialolympics.org](mailto:family@specialolympics.org)

### SPECIAL OLYMPICS

1325 G Street, NW, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20005 USA  
[www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org)

*Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation for the Benefit of Persons with Mental Retardation.*



*Through my sons ... I have learned what is important in life.*

*Through my sons ... I have made wonderful friends who see me for what I am.*

*Through my sons ... I have become part of the Special Olympics Family Support Network which allows me to give support to others in a similar situation.*

*Through my sons ... I feel that I am making a contribution to society.*

*Through my sons ... I have been blessed.*

**Patricia Hickey**

*Family Leader, Special Olympics Ireland*

*Funded through the generous contributions of Kim Samuel-Johnson  
and the Samel Family Foundation*



**Special Olympics**