

# Community Builder Toolkit for Family Leaders

Section 2: Planning for Successful Family Engagement

*Special Olympics*



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Welcome to the *Community Builder Toolkit for Family Leaders, Section 2: Planning for Successful Family Engagement*. The Power Point presentations, sample materials and guidance in this section are important for all Programs. Whether you are just getting started in creating a plan for family engagement or if you have a long history of engaging families, this section is designed to be a resource that will support quality programming and alignment with the Strategic Plan.

**Note: This section builds on information provided in *Section 1: Orientation to Family Engagement***

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## Section 2: Planning for Successful Family Engagement

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The objective of *Section 2: Planning for Successful Family Engagement* is to build your Program's capacity for family engagement. Topics covered include:

- Family leadership skills
- Organizational structures
- Roles and responsibilities
- Key strategies for success
- Planning tools

## Family leadership strengths



- Good communicator
- Well organized
- Established connections in the community
- Passion for Special Olympics

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Every family leader will bring their own skills, abilities and background to the planning process. Think about these four strengths and select the one that you feel describes you best.

- Good communicator
- Well organized
- Established connections in the community
- Passion for Special Olympics

Break into pairs or small groups with others who have identified the same strength and discuss.

1. Why do you believe this is your strongest skill?
2. How have you been able to use your strengths to contribute to families getting involved in Special Olympics so far?
3. What skills do you look for in others to help you with your work in engaging families?

Share highlights of your small group discussion with the large group.

## Program strengths



- Good communication with families
- Organized structure for family engagement
- Community partnerships to recruit and support families
- Passion for Special Olympics

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Every Program also brings strengths to the work of engaging families. With a show of hands, “vote” for the strength you think is most important for Special Olympics to successfully engage families. Take note of the number of votes for each area. Then in your small group discuss these 5 related questions.

1. How does your Board recruit families to be on the Board and to represent families concerns, interests and priorities in making decisions?
2. How does your Program organize your family program, do you have a National Family Coordinator?
3. Do families receive regular communication?
4. Are families connected to community resources?
5. How does the Program inspire family’s passion for Special Olympics and for building communities of acceptance for athletes?

Discuss in the large group the highlights from group discussions. Then ask the participants to share any insights they gained from the discussion about their own Program’s strengths or areas that may need more attention. Summarize that takes both strong leaders and a committed Program to engage families.

## Family Support Network (FSN)



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Special Olympics Programs have been encouraged to set up Family Support Networks (FSN) to provide a programmatic structure for reaching out to new families, welcoming them into Special Olympics and providing peer support. The FSN also provides a community for families to be involved in social activities, discussions and educational seminars—called Family Forums, and training.

## Basic FSN Structure



- Family Support Network Coordinator with Advisory Committee coordinates outreach to new families
- 10 community partners help identify families
- 10 trained Family Messengers provide one-on-one welcome to new families
- Family Welcome events and Family Forums offer support and peer networking opportunities

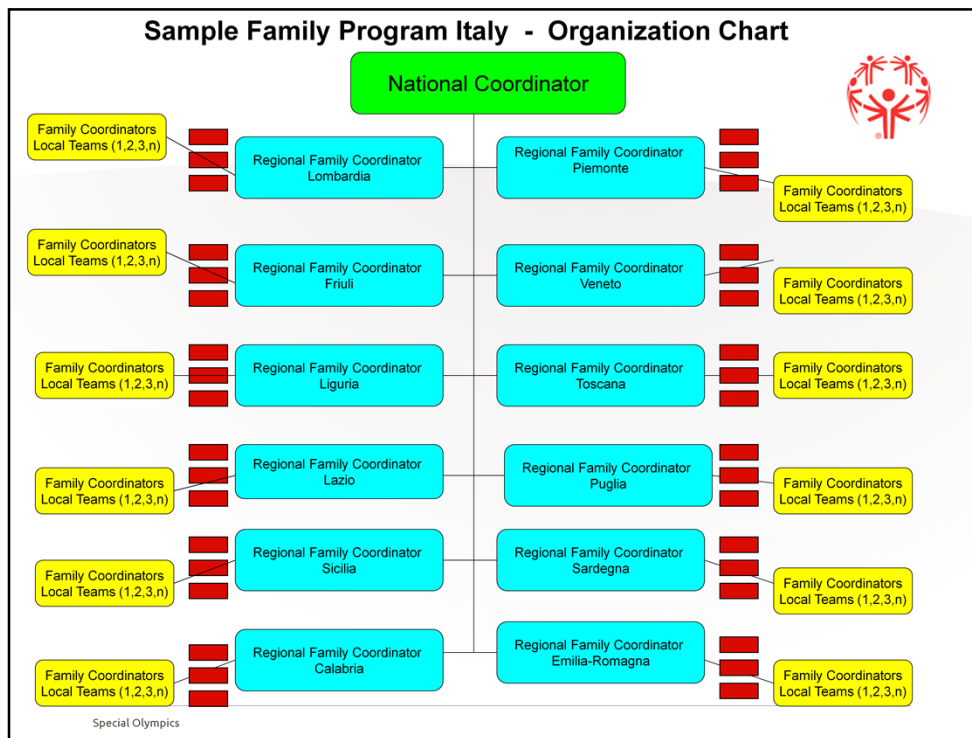
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The basic Family Support Network (FSN) structure includes the following:

- Family Support Network Coordinator with Advisory Committee that coordinates outreach to new families
- 10 community partners who help identify families
- 10 trained Family Messengers who provide one-on-one welcome to new families
- Family Welcome events and Family Forums that offer support and peer networking opportunities

The creation of FSNs began in 2002 with grant funding and Programs were given materials to support them in recruiting new families, setting up a budget and annual plan to begin partnering with community organizations and matching trained Family Messengers with new family members. The Family Forums have been well received and replicated in a number of Regions and in other areas the Family Messengers have been highly active in supporting peers.

This FSN structure promoted since 2002 can serve as a starting point to recruit families and offer support, but more structure and planning is needed to engage families more broadly.



Italy has created a highly organized structure that engages a large number of families in a systematic and coordinated way and a staff person designated as National Coordinator. This model offers many more leadership and engagement opportunities at all levels.

☐The National Coordinator is constantly in direct contact with 16 Regional Family Coordinators (18 forecasted for the end of 2012)

☐Each Regional Coordinator is in touch with every single Team Family Coordinator (about 200 at present) directly or through local coordinators

☐National Coordinators are periodically in contact with Team Family Coordinators, in order to maintain the “sense” of membership to the Organization, to communicate relevant information (i.e. National Games, Family Campus, National initiatives etc)

A communication program based on SMS and email messages is active to reach the maximum number of people to increase the link and the sense of membership to Special Olympics

Ask the group to compare their own Program structure to this example.

1. Are sub-Programs connected to the National Program through a National Family Coordinator, other staff or family leader with defined responsibilities for outreach and coordination?
2. Do the subprograms also have Family Coordinators with defined roles and responsibilities?
3. Do they have a system for communicating plans and getting feedback from family leaders at all levels?

Summarize: Through an organized structure, many families can have the opportunity to participate in planning, evaluation and program development. Family leaders can also take responsibility for organizing outreach, communication, programming and events.



## Italy's Face-to-Face Meetings



- National Family Coordinator meets with Regional Family Coordinators
- Regional or Local Coordinator meet the Team Family Coordinators
- During National Games (sometimes during Regional Games too) a convention regarding relevant themes (Laws, Health, Working World, Sexuality, Social Integration etc) is organized for family members
- Once a year a National Family Campus is organized to gather for one week 45/50 families together from all Italian regions.
- Training seminars and meetings (leadership, communication, vision of Special Olympics word) are also organized

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Italy also has a formal system to make sure that everyone in leadership positions are aware of the Program priorities, involved in developing targets, providing information about their successes and challenges and ideas for ways to improve the organization.



## Strategic Plan Goal for Families:

*To create trained, empowered and involved families at all levels of the organization.*

As our goal is to create trained, empowered and involved families at all levels of the organization it is important to develop leaders with defined responsibilities for family engagement. Sharing leadership is empowering.

# Committed Families



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Families are committed to Special Olympics and when they are part of an organized structure committed to athlete success they are willing to commit time, skills and leadership to the effort.

So the Program planning process begins with defining the structure and leadership for organizing families that builds on your current Program success.

# Roles and Responsibilities



- Family Coordinators
- Board Member representing families
- Family Committee
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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The exact job description of Family Coordinators should reflect the unique organization and ensure coordination with key volunteers and staff, as the efforts to engage families needs to be a team effort.

Ask each participant to write down at least three other key volunteers or staff who might need to be involved in their planning for family engagement to be successful. Some suggestions might be:

National Director

Young Athlete Coordinator

Regional Sports Director



Point out that part of the Special Olympics culture is to do annual planning at many levels. No Special Olympics program is perfect and the Strategic Plan challenges all Programs to think differently about what they do and how they can maximize community partnerships and family engagement to reach higher goals. Every one of us is trying to improve what we do, and we should never think the job of improvement is finished, even if a plan is already in place for this year. In fact, new Quality Standards are under development to assist in setting higher goals in many areas—including Family engagement.

# Quality standards...



## Are:

- Steps to improvement
- A reference tool
- Input for annual and strategic planning



## Are Not:

- Accreditation Requirements
- Rules
- "Demands"

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Quality standards will assist Programs in going beyond the basic General Rules and Accreditation requirements. Look for final standards in 2013 to assist in steps to improvement, provide a reference tool, and input for annual and strategic planning.

Accreditation standards require a family member on the Board. How might they be engaged to

# What Works, What Helps



## Program Reports

### Special Olympics Family Leadership and Support



Family Program Example  
Special Olympics Italy

## Sample Materials



Your planning process will benefit from examples of successes from other Programs included in the online e-Library. However, one size does not fit all. Remember the planning process begins with assessing family needs, strengths, culture. Each area you choose to focus on will have many details that need to be planned. For example developing a Family Support Network involves training, outreach to community partners, matching family members and hosting orientation meetings. Family program activities to support and engage families (such as Health Forums, EKS Day, YA training) need to be developed, marketed, implemented, evaluated, too. Finally, it takes an ongoing effort to retain families as volunteers, coaches, Board Members, fundraisers, and other program leaders and plans need to incorporate recognition of family contributions and continuous assessment of needs and interests of involved families.

# Planning Process



- Assess current Program practices
- Recruit a diverse team to support planning
- Identify short-term and long-term program goals and targets
- Identify strategies for achieving targets, who is responsible and timeline
- Monitor implementation
- Review progress and set new goals

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In this session we did a brief exercise to assess your current Program practice and to review how people with diverse strengths can each contribute to success. To plan for success you need to go further and recruit diverse family representatives to be part of your planning team. The Board family representative may already have a committee that advises them and can be a good group to help solicit input and suggestions from all families. It is important to align your planning with the Strategic Plan.

Provide the group with one or more of the planning tools from the e-Library to work on a sample DRAFT Plan with goals, targets, strategies that are aligned with the Strategic Plan and 4 focus areas for family engagement. Ask for commitments of their next steps to planning with their Program team and provide guidance as appropriate for submitting plans to Regions, SOI or potential funders.

Regroup and have at least one Program share their DRAFT plan to solicit feedback. Then refer the group to additional Community Builder Toolkit sections

Section 4: Family Volunteer Recruitment

Section 5: Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

Section 6: Engaging Families of Young Athletes

Section 7: Resources Section