

Volunteer Handbook



SPECIAL OLYMPICS FLORIDA
1915 Don Wickham Drive
Clermont, Florida, 34711
352-243-9536

www.specialolympicsflorida.org

For list of local programs throughout Florida, visit
www.specialolympicsflorida.org/local-programs

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Special Olympics Florida is to provide year-round sports training and competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for people with intellectual disabilities who wish to participate, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.



THANK YOU

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Special Olympics Florida. We rely on the dedication and generosity of more than 21,000 volunteers each year who help provide year-round sports training and athletic competitions for more than 34,000 children and adults with intellectual disabilities at no cost to them or their caregivers. Thank you for choosing to volunteer your time to make a difference for the Special Olympics Florida athletes. Through these volunteer experiences, you have the chance to share moments of triumph and celebration with athletes as they engage in meaningful sports competitions.

Volunteers are truly the backbone of Special Olympics Florida, and your dedication ultimately allows us to fulfill our mission of providing year-round sports training and athletic competition. While we provide the venue, athletes take center stage as Special Olympics Florida continues its campaign to challenge the world to recognize the gifts of people with intellectual disabilities.

This handbook provides a glimpse of the opportunities you have as a volunteer. Whether you volunteer as a coach, for an event, or at a local or state office, your time and talents are important. It is because of your dedication that Special Olympics athletes have the opportunity to develop physical fitness and become competitive athletes. Through their involvement in sports, athletes build self-esteem, develop friendships, and learn life skills that translate beyond the playing field.

Thank you for your commitment!

SPORTS OFFERED

Special Olympics Florida offers the following sports:

Alpine Skiing*
Aquatics
Athletics
Basketball
Bocce
Bowling
Cheerleading
Cycling
Equestrian
Figure Skating*
Golf
Gymnastics
MATP Sports
Powerlifting
Sailing*
Soccer
Softball
Stand Up Paddle
Surfing
Tennis
Volleyball
Unified Flag Football

* Not a state-level competition



VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

There are two classifications of volunteers at Special Olympics Florida:

- **CLASS A:** Individuals with 1-on-1 unsupervised contact with athletes: coaches, chaperones, speech coaches, mentors, individuals who have fundraising responsibilities, and individuals authorized to speak on behalf of the organization. **A criminal background check and Protective Behaviors Training are part of the registration process for all Class A volunteers.**
- **CLASS B:** Individuals who are day-of-event volunteers with no athlete supervisory responsibilities. Class B Volunteers typically pre-register for a particular event and then fill out the Class B paperwork upon arrival at the venue to volunteer. They should be prepared to show a photo ID when registering.

As you read through this handbook, you will notice the type of opportunities which are Class A or Class B. These opportunities are available at the local, area, and state level. Once you have decided where you want to volunteer and the type of opportunity, please contact the local County Director where you want to volunteer or the State Office in Clermont.

VOLUNTEER AGE REQUIREMENTS

- Volunteers of all ages are welcome, however, **general volunteers must be at least 15 years of age, unless accompanied by an adult.**
- Youth groups for events should have one adult per every 4 youth. Some events will require a different ratio (please check with event organizer).
- Assistant coaches and sports volunteers must be at least 16 years of age .
- Head coaches must be at least 18 years of age.
- Groups are welcome, especially for day-of-event volunteers.

Special Olympics Florida serves more than **35,436** athletes and offers training and competition in a variety of team and individual sports. These athletes are trained by 2,400 volunteer coaches and are supported and encouraged by more than 21,000 event volunteers statewide.



THERE ARE A VARIETY OF VOLUNTEER POSITIONS AVAILABLE FOR YOU TO CHOOSE

[Area or State Event Volunteers](#) (Class B) Help at local, regional or state level tournaments or competitions (i.e., assist with events, awards, serve meals, keep score). Events range in time commitment from 2-6 hours on the day of the event.

[Coach/Assistant Coach/Sports Volunteers](#) (Class A) Work with a group of athletes for several hours a week for a two to three month sport season. *Requires background check and Protective Behaviors Training.*

[Local Programs](#) (Class A & Class B) Contact your County Director to assist with volunteer opportunities locally. Opportunities exist for Class A and Class B volunteers. Volunteers are needed to serve as coaches, chaperones, serve on local management committees, and help at special events and competitions.

[Healthy Athletes® \(medical volunteers\)](#) (Class B) Healthy Athletes offers exams in six disciplines, including Fit Feet, FUNfitness (Physical Therapy), Healthy Hearing, Health Promotion, Opening Eyes®, and Special Smiles®. Volunteer opportunities are limited to health professionals and students in these fields.

[State & Local Fundraising Events](#) (Class A & B) Volunteer at fundraising events and on planning committees. Time commitment may be for a specific time period (i.e., serve on a committee that meets monthly) or on the day of the event.

[State Office Administrative Volunteers](#) (Class A) Assist with the front desk and other administrative projects in Special Olympics Florida State Office in Clermont.

[Unified Partners](#) (Class A) Volunteer as a partner in a sport and compete side-by-side with athletes. Time commitment is a two-three month sport season. Contact your County Director to find out opportunities near you.

TYPES OF VOLUNTEERS

CLASS A VOLUNTEERS

Individuals with 1-on-1 unsupervised contact with athletes.

CLASS B VOLUNTEERS

Individuals who are day-of-event volunteers with no athlete supervisory responsibilities.



CLASS A VOLUNTEERS

ALL CLASS A VOLUNTEERS are required to submit a volunteer application and be screened for participation with Special Olympics Florida. Once screened and accepted, Class A Volunteers will be re-screened every three years.

Special Olympics Inc. (SOI) developed the Protective Behaviors Training as a tool to assist with protecting Special Olympics athletes from abuse. All Class A volunteers, 16 years of age and older, must complete this training.

BACKGROUND SCREENINGS: In conducting the required background screenings, Special Olympics Florida will use an SOI approved vendor whose information includes access to criminal records databases throughout the United States, as well as sex offender registries for each state where the registry is available.

MOTOR VEHICLE RECORD CHECK: If an applicant answers yes to the question on the Volunteer Application regarding their driving record, or if information is received through the background screening that the applicant may have motor vehicle related convictions, then the program may conduct a motor vehicle record check for that applicant.

MINORS: Prospective Class A Volunteers who are under the age of 18 will not be subject to a criminal records check, but must submit two (2) personal/professional references. In addition, the volunteer application must be signed by their parent/guardian.

NOTIFICATION OF DISQUALIFICATION OR RESTRICTIONS: If information is obtained that affects the applicant's status as a Class A Volunteer, Special Olympics Florida will notify the applicant in writing.

CLASS B VOLUNTEERS

Class B Volunteers are persons who have limited/casual contact with athletes or who have contact with athletes accompanied by coaches or chaperones. This definition includes: day-of event/competition volunteers. It also includes volunteers who assist with Healthy Athletes or fundraising events.

APPLICATION PROCESS: Class B Volunteers typically pre-register for a particular event and then fill out the Class B paperwork upon arrival at the venue to volunteer. Please be prepared to show a photo ID when registering. Parent/guardian signature is required for Class B volunteers under 18.

Volunteers under 15 must be accompanied by an adult.

COACHING INFORMATION (Class A Volunteers)

A **Coach** assumes overall responsibility for the delegation, team, etc.

A **Head Coach** must be at least 18 years of age and a responsible individual who can commit time on at least a weekly basis throughout the respective sport season. (Sport Training Certification is required.)

Some of the Head Coaches' responsibilities include:

- Ensure that each athlete has a valid Special Olympics Florida medical form on file at the State Office in Clermont and that a copy of each medical form is with him/her at each practice and event.
- Ensure that all paperwork (registration materials, medicals, etc.) is completed by deadlines. If the Head Coach cannot do the paperwork, it is his/her responsibility to appoint a responsible person to do so.
- Be up to date on all current rules for the sport in which he/she is coaching.
- Make sure that athletes are trained appropriately for competition.
- Adhere to the Special Olympics Florida Coaches Code of Conduct.

An **Assistant Coach** must be at least 16 years of age and a responsible individual who can commit time on at least a weekly basis throughout the respective sport season. (Sport Training Certification is required.)

TRAINING AND PAPERWORK REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL COACHES:

- Coaches and Chaperones 16 years of age or older, **MUST** acquire **Class A Volunteer Status** by having a Volunteer Registration Form (background check) approved.
- Must complete the Protective Behaviors Training.
- Must be certified in sports coached through the Special Olympics Florida Coach Education Program.



"Special Olympics means everything to me, and the volunteers are the glue that holds us together."

Stacy Barnes
Escambia County Athlete and
Special Olympics Florida Global
Messenger

IMPORTANT DAY-OF EVENT VOLUNTEER INFORMATION (Class B Volunteers)

GENERAL INFORMATION

- You represent Special Olympics Florida as a volunteer. You will be asked to show photo identification upon registration at the event.
- Remember to conduct yourself in a professional manner relating to athletes, other volunteers, family, the general public, and the media.
- Please give your full attention to your volunteer duty. If you need assistance or are finished with your duty, please see the volunteer contact.
- Please do not try to “train” or “coach” the athletes. Athletes have been working with their coaches for weeks for this event and are looking to them for guidance.
- Photographs and video recordings are taken at each event. By signing in for your shift, you authorize Special Olympics Florida to use your image and likeness in promotional materials.
- Please note, a volunteer is **NOT** to accompany an athlete away from the competition area or to the locker room. Please get the athlete’s coach.

DAY-OF EVENT INFORMATION

HOW TO VOLUNTEER

- Most events need to be registered in advance. See the website for more details.
- At check-in show a photo ID and complete the Class B form. Volunteers under the age of 15 must be accompanied by an adult.
- On-site training will be provided for day-of event volunteers.

VOLUNTEER ATTIRE

- A volunteer t-shirt will be provided at most events.
- Please wear athletic shoes and dress for comfort and mobility.
- Do not wear attire with vulgar print or tank tops.
- Protect yourself from the sun and elements.
- There is not a storage area for personal belongings. Please plan accordingly.

FOOD & BEVERAGE

- Absolutely no alcohol of any kind is allowed. Volunteers will refrain from alcohol while involved in Special Olympics functions where athletes are present.
- You will be notified of the meals provided per volunteer shift. At most events, depending on your shift, there is a meal or snacks provided.
- Please take frequent water breaks.

DAY-OF EVENT ACCIDENTS & INJURIES

- Medical staff is available for events. In case of an accident, DO NOT attempt to treat the sick or injured person. Contact the nearest medical personnel immediately.

VOLUNTEER OATH

I promise to give of the time in my life so that Special Olympics athletes can have the time of their lives. I promise to support Special Olympics not just as an expression of charity, but as a form of respect for my fellow human beings. I promise to spread the word of volunteerism because, in giving, I receive so much more in return.



VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

As a Special Olympics Florida volunteer, I agree that while serving as a volunteer, I will:

- Provide for the general welfare, health, and safety of all Special Olympics athletes and volunteers.
- Dress and act in an appropriate manner at all times.
- Follow the established rules and guidelines of Special Olympics and/or any agency involved with Special Olympics.
- Report any emergencies to the appropriate authorities after first taking immediate action to ensure the health and safety of the participants.
- Abstain from the consumption or use of all alcohol, tobacco products, and illegal substances while involved with any Special Olympics event, competition, or training.
- Not engage in any inappropriate contact or relationship with athletes, volunteers, or other participants of Special Olympics.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

To volunteer, follow these steps:

- Register for opportunities that interest you at www.specialolympicflorida.org.
- For specific information about opportunities in counties throughout Florida, contact your local County Director.
- If you are interested in coaching, please contact your [local County Director](#) prior to starting the [Class A Volunteer Registration Process](#).
- Please read the Special Olympics Inc. [Volunteer Screening Policy](#) which was developed to safeguard our athletes and our volunteers.
- All Class A volunteers 18 years of age and older must complete the [Protective Behaviors Training](#).

For information about volunteering, contact 352-243-9536 or www.specialolympicsflorida.org/get-involved

For a list of County Directors, visit

www.specialolympicsflorida.org/local-programs