Volunteer Handbook
Participate Once, Be Inspired Forever

On behalf of the athletes we serve across the state, thank you for your choosing to volunteer with Special Olympics Utah. Special Olympics is about transforming lives, including your own. It is about working together to create a better world for athletes with intellectual disabilities on the playing field -- and in life. By donating your time and energy to Special Olympics Utah, you are showing a commitment to make our community a more and welcoming place for people of all abilities.

Volunteers are vital to our organization. Over 4,000 volunteers a year dedicate their time to Special Olympics Utah. Our volunteers are all ages and their commitments can range from an afternoon to a lifetime. They include coaches, event managers, committee members, fundraisers and so much more. Everyone can contribute to Special Olympics Utah; there is a volunteer opportunity for everyone. Whether you help run a sports competition or cheer as a Fan in the Stand, your involvement helps make our athletes’ dream a reality.

This handbook has been developed to give you a better understanding of Special Olympics Utah and how important your role as a volunteer is to the success of our athletes. Give your all when you volunteer and you’ll find that you will get more out of the experience than you put in. Thanks again for your commitment – and have fun!

Sincerely,

Judy Hut
Outreach & Volunteer Manager
Special Olympics Utah

“Volunteers are great! They make our events possible. They also help us at LETR torch runs, Utah Open, Polar Plunge and Hall of Fame Gala, area and state games. They are Unified Partners. They make us happy when they cheer us on. We appreciate them giving us medals. Everyone should come volunteer at Special Olympics Utah!”

- Chris Briseno, Public Relations & Program Assistant/Special Olympics Utah Athlete
About Special Olympics Utah

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

The ultimate goal of Special Olympics Utah is to give people with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their skills and talents through sports training and competition. Through this, our athletes’ lives are improved as they develop friendships, gain courage, fight stigmas and prove that they are competent, valued members of society.

PARTICIPANTS
Special Olympics Utah serves nearly 2,500 athletes and Unified Partners and offers training and competition in 7 team and individual sports plus the Motor Activities Training Program (MATP). Athletes are ages 8 and older. These athletes are coached, supported and encouraged by nearly 4,000 volunteers annually who include coaches, families, businesses and leaders in the community who volunteer throughout the year.

No matter economic, demographic, religious or other social factors, all Special Olympics Utah athletes are given the same opportunities to participate and compete in SOUT programs. Participation and competition are free to all athletes, families and volunteers, and there are programs for athletes of all skills levels. Anyone can participate in Special Olympics Utah if they meet the eligibility criteria of having intellectual disabilities or a similar developmental disability.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETE OATH
“Let me win; but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”
SPECIAL OLYMPICS 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 Opportunities

There are two levels of Special Olympics Utah volunteers: Class A or Class B.

CLASS A VOLUNTEER
A long-term opportunity that involves having close physical contact with athletes on a regular basis in a position of authority, supervision and trust with athletes and within the organization. Examples include coaches, Unified Partners, Area Management teams and volunteers who have substantial administrative and/or fiscal authority. All Class A volunteers must pass a background check. Fundraising event committee members, games management team members and board members who meet the definition of a Class A Volunteer are also subject to the screening requirements.

Area Management Team

- Group of volunteer leaders who work together to strengthen and support Special Olympic Utah’s geographical areas. Assists with a specific competition committee in organizing and implementing the sporting event at the area or state levels. Time commitment depends on the level of event (approx. 3 – 4 months leading up to competition). After-hours meetings and planning sessions involved.

Coach/Assistant Coach

- Work directly with SOUT athletes through teaching and training of a specific sport. Participation is seasonal for each sport. The usual commitment is 2 hours per week for a minimum of 8 weeks.

Unified Partner

- Unified Sports Partner® is a program that combines individuals with intellectual disabilities (athletes) and individuals without intellectual disabilities (partners) on sports teams for training and competition. Athletes and partners train and compete alongside one another. Participation is seasonal for each sport, generally 1 or 2 practices per week throughout the season.

CLASS B VOLUNTEER
This is a short-term or day-of-event opportunity that involves providing assistance and support at a competition or event, but not necessarily close physical contact with our athletes. These are “walk-on” volunteer opportunities, meaning no prior experience or greater involvement with Special Olympics is required. Day-of-event volunteers are essential to Special Olympics Utah being able to host and run competitions.

Class B volunteers must be ages 16 and older to volunteer independently, ages 12 – 15 can volunteer with adult supervision and any age can be a Fan in the Stand!
Volunteer Guidelines

Special Olympics Utah should offer a rewarding experience for everyone whether they are an athlete, volunteer, or family member. To ensure a positive experience, the following suggestions and ideas should be observed:

1) As a volunteer in any capacity, you represent SOUT to the participants, the families, the general public and the media. No matter what your volunteer assignment, it is critical that you conduct yourself in a professional manner. If your job requires a credential or identification badge, be sure to wear it all times.

2) Be courteous and cooperative with staff, coaches, and other volunteers. Please keep your commitment and stay until your shift has ended and help train your replacement if needed.

3) Remember, people with and without intellectual disabilities are more alike than different. Special Olympics athletes, like everyone else, want to have fun and make friends! Many people ask “How do I treat a Special Olympics athlete?” The answer: act the same way you would toward any other person of that same age. Talk to the athletes as you would anyone else. Ask them to repeat themselves if necessary and maintain eye contact. Those competing in sports and attending events are referred to as “ATHLETES” at all times.

4) Encourage appropriate behavior. Behavior that is not appropriate among persons without disabilities is not appropriate among persons with disabilities.

5) Don’t be afraid to ask staff or other volunteers if you are unsure about something (i.e. appropriate behavior, problems occurring, clarification on assignments). Report anything observed, either in the physical environment or an individual's behavior, which may cause potential harm.

6) Some athletes enjoy hugs while others do not. Take your cue from them and set your own comfort zone. All participation deserves recognition regardless of place or finish. Recognize and praise individual efforts and overall performance regardless of place finish. Congratulations are encouraged for all of the competitors (i.e. “high five”, pat on the back, handshake, a hug if initiated by the athlete).

7) Please do not try to “train” or “coach” the athletes. They have been working with their coaches for weeks for this event and are looking to them for guidance.

8) Special Olympics Utah will be taking photographs and video recording of today’s events. By signing in for your shift, you authorize Special Olympics Utah to use your image and likeness in promotional materials.
Protective Behaviors

Actions Special Olympics Utah has taken to protect athletes:
- Protective Behavior’s training
- Volunteer screening requirements in the US
- Code of Conduct for athletes and coaches

Inappropriate Behavior
Inappropriate gifts, trips, outings, or other gestures of affection from a volunteer include:
- Invitations for sleepovers at a volunteer’s house
- Invitations to parties at a volunteer’s house where parents or care providers are not included
- Excessive displays of interest in a particular athlete or group of athletes (such as all male athletes or only athletes under the age of 13)

Emotional Abuse
- Profanity is never allowed
- Treat athletes with respect and provide encouragement
- Do not allow demeaning nicknames even among teammates
- Discipline should be part of a meaningful behavior modification strategy and never acted on in anger

Physical Abuse
- Corporal punishment is never allowed no matter who says it is OK
- Withholding food or water is maltreatment and strictly prohibited
- Only give prescribed medications in accordance with state regulations (consult your Special Olympics Program office for those regulations)
- Be aware of athlete sensitivity to temperature, sound and touch
Volunteer Code of Conduct

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

- Demonstrate a positive and constructive attitude toward Special Olympics competition, the athletes, coaches, officials, and fans.
- Provide for the general welfare, health and safety of all Special Olympics Utah athletes and volunteers.
- Carry out all aspects of assignment or notify the Volunteer Coordinator if assignment cannot be completed.
- 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 Utah event, competition or training school.
- Not engage in any inappropriate contact or relationship with athletes, volunteers or other participants of Special Olympics Utah.

Volunteer Terminology

- Do not use the word “the” in front of Special Olympics unless describing a specific Olympics event or competition.
- Avoid the use of phrase “intellectually disabled”. Refer to Athletes as people with intellectual disabilities.
- Refer to the Athletes as “Athletes” OR as “Special Olympic Athletes”. We cannot use the term “Special Olympians”.
- Children and adults compete in Special Olympics. Be sensitive to the age group with whom you are working, “Kids” may be okay when addressing children, but not adults. Adults are a valued part of the Special Olympics program. Using the term “athlete” is appropriate for all.
- The word “retard” or “retarded” is offensive and never acceptable in any of its forms, even if used in jest.
Volunteer FAQ’s

How do I get started?
Visit www.sout.org for a list of upcoming volunteer opportunities. The calendar is updated regularly with events throughout Utah. Submit an online application (required of all individual volunteers). The Volunteer Coordinator will email you with the details of your assignment the week of the event.

What do I need to bring?
The Volunteer Coordinator will email you any specific requirements before your event. Volunteers are responsible for their own meals at most events as we are unable to provide food at this time. You should bring your own water bottle, snacks and food especially if working more than one shift. A fanny pack is highly recommended as volunteers must be responsible for their items at all times and there is typically no storage area for purses or backpacks. It is required that all volunteers age 16 & older bring a photo ID when checking-in at the event.

What should I wear?
We recommend volunteers dress for comfort and mobility. Wear comfortable athletic shoes. Do not wear attire with vulgar or profane print and never wear inappropriate clothing. Always dress according to the weather for outside events. Protect yourself from the sun and the elements. Sunscreen, hat, jacket, coat, raincoats are highly recommended depending on the season. If you have a Special Olympics Utah shirt, please wear it. You are welcome to wear corporate or group t-shirts.

How do I sign up a group of volunteers?
If you are interested in bringing a group of 6 or more out to volunteer for an event, first contact the Volunteer Coordinator to see what opportunities are available. We welcome businesses, community and youth groups, school clubs, classes, families, etc. Youth groups are welcome with proper adult supervision (see age requirements).

What is the age requirement?
Event volunteers must be 16 years or older to volunteer independently. Anyone 15 years and younger must be accompanied by an adult (4 to 1 ratio for youth groups; 1 adult per every 4 youth). Children are welcome at our events, but anyone 7 years and younger will not be assigned any duties and are welcome to spectate and cheer.

Can I volunteer to fulfill community service hours?
We do accept day-of-event volunteers needing to fulfill community service hours. Students fulfilling a school, church or civic requirement must follow the age requirements; a parent must supervise if under the age of 16. Court Ordered Volunteers are welcome as long as they were not convicted or charged with a violent crime, child abuse or neglect, child pornography, child abduction, kidnapping, rape or any sexual offense, or ordered by a court to receive psychiatric or psychological treatment in connection to that crime. The Volunteer Coordinator will verify your service hours via email or fax after the event.

How can I get more involved?
Volunteers are vital to our organization. We encourage passionate and committed people to get involved with Special Olympics Utah on a regular basis. When you register online to volunteer, your email address will be added to our database. You will be emailed about upcoming day-of-event volunteer opportunities in your area. You can also LIKE us on Facebook (Special Olympics Utah) where we regularly post volunteer needs. If you’re interested in becoming a Class A Volunteer (area management team, coach, Unified Partner, etc.), fill out the General Volunteer Information Request form on www.sout.org and we will notify you of upcoming opportunities.

Contact Information

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