

Coach Education Program

The key to improving athlete performance and well-being is based on the quality of sport training and experiences provided by the local Special Olympics coach. "Coach" refers to an individual who assumes responsibility for athletes, actively trains athletes, and coaches them in competitions. The SO Indiana Coach Education Program adheres to the basic standards and competencies necessary and essential for being a Special Olympics coach, as defined by Special Olympics North America. Standardization of essential knowledge and coaching proficiency adds credibility and consistency to the entire program. In addition, coaches will gain new and/or improved competencies and skills, which will provide better opportunities for their athletes.

After all, the better the coach . . . the better the athlete.

In a 2013 survey of 438 current SO Indiana coaches, it was revealed that:

- 61% competed in high school sports,
- Only 37% competed in high school sports in the sport they currently coach,
- 58% have attended trainings in the sport they coach, and
- Only 6% have attended trainings designed to teach them how to coach SO athletes.

The Coach Education Program is based on:

- Athlete safety is the coach's top priority.
- As outlined in the Special Olympics Founding Principles: "Consistent training under the guidance of qualified coaches, with emphasis on physical conditioning, is essential to the development of sports skills, and competition among those of equal abilities is the most appropriate means of testing these skills, measuring progress and providing incentives for personal growth."
- Also from the Special Olympics Founding Principles: "Special Olympics celebrates and strives to promote the spirit of sportsmanship and a love of participation in sports for its own sake."
- Special Olympics coaches not only provide skills training for athletes, but are also role models and character builders. Coaches give SO athletes the most immediate awareness of their own worth, ability, courage and capacity to grow and improve.
- An effective coaches' education program, which advances both coach and athlete, must include subjects beyond sport-specific material. It must include topics of safety, health, injury prevention, nutrition, general physical fitness, sportsmanship, character development and coaching philosophy.
- Special Olympics coaches are eager to learn about coaching and the sport, especially when knowing their athletes and County Program will benefit. The SO Indiana Coach Education Program provides rewards to County Programs who have coaches registered in the program and those coaches complete online courses.
- Other sports organizations have excellent coach education courses. SO Indiana should utilize these learning opportunities. Though many of these courses focus on interscholastic sports, principles are applicable to Special Olympics.
- Online courses are the preferred method of learning. Standardization of content is insured through online courses. Necessary competencies are reviewed through these online courses. Coaches have limited time and are already donating many hours to their athletes. Online courses are more "user-friendly", allowing coaches to take courses when their time allows. Online courses allow users to stop and resume learning without losing progress.

COACH EDUCATION LEVELS & REQUIREMENTS

The following section lists the required coaching courses to achieve each level. However, courses do not need to be taken in any particular order. Also coaches may take courses in any Level. However, all requirements for Level 1 must be met before a coach may work with Special Olympics athletes.

LEVEL 1

All SO Indiana coaches must achieve Level 1, which is simply the requirements to become a Class A Volunteer. See Page 36 for details on becoming a Class A Volunteer.

LEVEL 2

For coaches to achieve Level 2 certification, he/she must be a Class A Volunteer and complete the following 4 online courses.

- **Coaching Special Olympics Athletes** (from Human Kinetics Coach Education Center) - **\$16.95**
"This course prepares Special Olympics coaches to use their sport-specific knowledge in coaching athletes with intellectual disabilities. The 24/7 convenience and low cost make it attractive to new coaches in preparation for their first Special Olympics coaching role. It also meets the Special Olympics standards and competencies for coach certification. For veteran Special Olympics coaches, this course serves as a reminder of the essentials sometimes forgotten after years of coaching. The course also satisfies the Special Olympics recertification or continuing education requirement."
- **Coaching Unified Sports** (from the NFHS Learning Center) - **FREE**
"Unified Sports is an inclusive sports program that unites Special Olympics athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and partners (individuals without intellectual disabilities) as teammates for training and competition."
- **Sports Nutrition** (from the NFHS Learning Center) - **FREE**
"Proper nutrition can optimize athletic performance. This course hosted by sports medicine specialist Dr. Mick Koester, can help your students be performing at their peak. As a coach, this course contains practical tips on how you can model and teach proper nutrition to your athletes."
- **Sportsmanship** (from the NFHS Learning Center) - **FREE**
"The NFHS developed this free course to give you a better understanding of sportsmanship, how it impacts the educational process and identifies your specific role in modeling it at all interscholastic athletic events. Insight is shared throughout the course from fans, players, parents, teacher-coaches and officials. This course will help provide schools a more positive game environment."

Additional levels and courses to be added at a later time.

Questions? Interested in joining the Coach Education Program? Contact Jeff Mohler at jmohler@soindiana.org.

From now until June 15, 2015, the State Office has grant money to pay the registration fee for any Class A Volunteer who wishes to complete the "Coaching Special Olympics Athletes" online course.