



Athlete Leadership Handbook

Updated June 2017

**Special
Olympics**
Minnesota





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Find more information the Athlete Leadership Program, please visit
www.specialolympicsminnesota.org



The Mission

Special Olympics Minnesota offers children and adults with intellectual disabilities year-round sports training and competition. Through Special Olympics' athletic, health and leadership programs, people with intellectual disabilities transform themselves, their communities and the world.

The Vision

Special Olympics Minnesota will be recognized as the premier organization providing essential life skills opportunities for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. Our athletes will derive the full benefit of our mission through multi-level, year-round sports opportunities and related health and leadership programs.

The Mission of Athlete Leadership Programs (ALPs)

To empower athletes to develop leadership skills and utilize their voices to assume meaningful leadership roles, influence change in the Special Olympics movement, and educate communities around the world that results in positive life changes.

Basic ALPs Philosophies

1. Respect athletes as equal partners
2. Value athlete opinions and preferences.
3. Athletes can improve your program TREMENDOUSLY!
4. Listen! Take the time to be sure you understand when athletes speak to you.
5. Whenever possible, involve athletes in your work via leadership positions that are meaningful.
6. Allowing athletes to choose HOW and in what ROLE they participate in Special Olympics.
7. Encouraging athletes to take meaningful positions of influence and leadership throughout the organization to help determine policy and set direction.
8. Providing training for coaches, volunteers and parents as they welcome athletes in their new roles.



What is athlete leadership?

The Athlete Leadership program creates opportunities for Special Olympics athletes to develop and demonstrate leadership skills, utilize their voices and abilities to undertake meaningful leadership roles, and influence change inside and outside Special Olympics to help create inclusive communities all over the world.

The program has been around since 1986, starting with the Athlete for Outreach Course which is now called Sargent Shriver Global Messenger Program. It was expanded in 2002 to include training courses beyond that of the Sargent Shriver Global Messenger Program, and it has continued to grow in recent years. Recent years have seen significant growth from over 26,000 athlete leaders in 2010 to almost 45,000 athlete leaders by the end of 2015.

Key Principles of Athlete Leadership

- Athlete leadership translates to an athlete-centered, athlete-led organization
- Athletes must be empowered to define their own place in the movement
- Every athlete has leadership abilities beyond sport that can contribute to the movement
- Athlete leadership starts with an athlete making an informed choice of role(s)
- Athlete leadership has a powerful effect on athletes' self-esteem and self-confidence
- Most athletes benefit from education in leadership and technical skills before being placed in positions of responsibility
- Program leaders are instrumental in creating opportunities for athletes to lead, and supporting them to be successful.
- Athlete Leadership includes training courses that guide athletes toward a variety of roles, such as board/committee membership, games management, coaching, etc.
- Athletes need both immediate and real leadership opportunities, in particular to practice newly-learned leadership skills
- Most athletes benefit from the support of a committed athlete-centered unified partner whose role evolves as the athlete leader becomes a more capable leader
- Athletes have the right to view and assess their dislikes and likes when determining their preferred leadership role.

What we need to do next

Based on the challenges that exist, expanding and integrating Athlete Leadership is a vital part of the 2016 – 2020 global strategic plan shift towards “inclusive leadership”. Within Special Olympics, this means developing more athlete leaders and utilizing them as volunteers, as coaches, as fundraisers, as staff, as Board members. And beyond Special Olympics, it means athletes having opportunities to lead in their own communities, just like any other leaders.



Athlete Leadership Goal

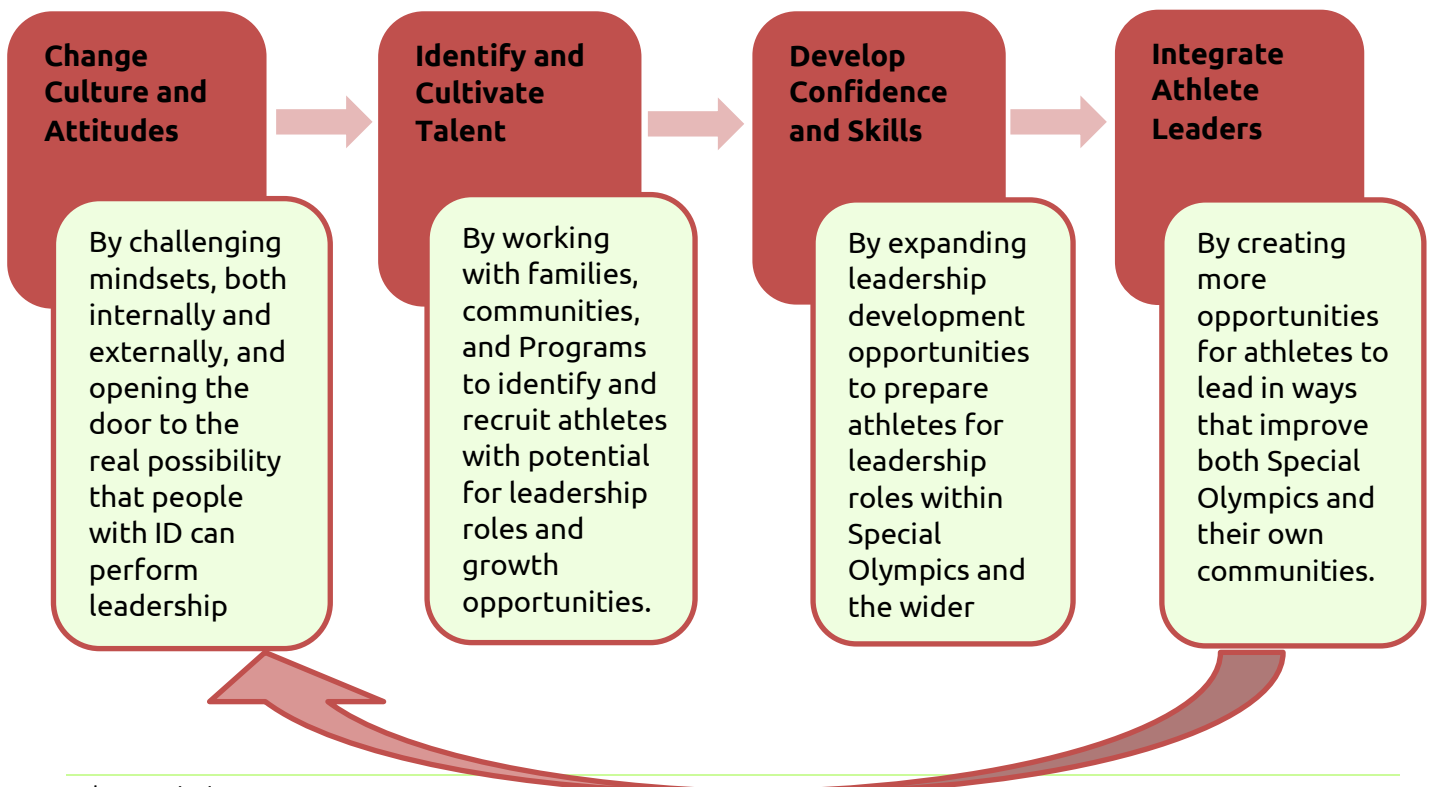
Special Olympics will be truly 'athlete-led', with the athlete voice to the fore, well-prepared athletes playing important leadership roles at all levels, and communities will embrace the potential for athletes to contribute, lead and work in ways that benefit everyone

Athlete leadership has a powerful effect on athletes' skills, self-esteem and self-confidence. It empowers them to improve Special Olympics and become more involved and respected in the community. Through active "inclusive leadership" by people with intellectual disabilities within Special Olympics and the wider community, we can have a huge impact on society.

Objectives

An organizational culture that respects and genuinely values the contributions and abilities of athlete leaders is one committed to identifying and cultivating talent. This gives athletes the confidence and skills needed to actively hold important leadership roles inside and outside our movement. By doing so, Special Olympics will demonstrate the real world leadership abilities of people with intellectual disabilities.

There are four objectives of Athlete Leadership:





Athlete Leadership Roles

In order to empower athletes and unified partners to serve in leadership roles and become active participants throughout Special Olympics Minnesota and their communities, we distinguish two types of opportunities: Leadership Roles and Growth Opportunities.

	Role	Primary Training or Resources	Other Notes
LEADERSHIP ROLES			
Board of Directors	Board Member	Governance & Leadership 101 course at ALPs University	Selected from SOMN Staff, training from CEO, and must be voted in by BOD
Committee & Input	Athlete Input Council	Governance & Leadership 101 course at ALPs University	Can be state/area/team councils
Communications	Global Messenger	Beginner Global Messenger course at ALPs University	Advanced training available
	International Global Messenger	Athletes as Ambassadors course at ALPs University	Must apply through the state office
	Bus Ambassador	Beginning Global Messenger course at ALPs University	Training day of event as well
Competitions	Event Manager	Athletes as Coaches course at ALPs University	Additional in-person/online training available
	Volunteer Roles	Any ALPs course at ALPs University	Day-of Volunteering opportunities available online



Fundraising	Support Development	Athletes in Fundraising elective course at ALPs University	
Health Programs	Health & Wellness Ambassador	Health & Wellness Ambassador course at ALPs University	
Teams	ASMT/LSMT Member	Governance & Leadership 101 course at ALPs University	Specific training with HOD and/or SOMN Program Manager
Teams	Coach	Athletes as Coaches course at ALPs University	Online Level 1 & 2 Training required
Special Olympics MN Staff	Front Desk Staff	Any ALPs course at ALPs University	Job Postings are listed on the main somn.org webpage
Special Olympics MN Internship	Department Specific Internship Positions	Any ALPs course at ALPs University	Internship Postings are listed on the main somn.org webpage
	Role	Primary Training or Resources	Other Notes
GROWTH OPPORTUNITY			
Communications	Speaking Engagements	Beginning Global Messenger	Examples could include, service groups, civic organizations, schools, etc....
Fitness	SOfit Program	Contact State Office	
Unified Juniors	Site Coordinator	Contact State Office	
Young Athletes	Site Coordinator	Young Athletes elective course at ALPs University	



Athlete Leadership University

Special Olympics Minnesota has provided training in athlete leadership since 1996. The program was formalized and expanded upon in 2002. 2017 marks the introduction and expansion of ALPs University, which provides education for Special Olympics athletes in a variety of leadership topics.

Main Courses

Beginner Global Messenger

Goals: Provide athletes with the skills necessary to give a short speech and answer questions from the audience about Special Olympics; offer ideas on different audiences that would be interested in hearing an athlete speak about Special Olympics.

Graduate Global Messenger

Goals: Provide athletes with the additional skills necessary to become an effective representative for Special Olympics at a variety of events and at a variety of levels (County, Area, State).

Athletes as Ambassadors

Goals: Understand what an Ambassador Special Olympics means, gain experiential training regarding various scenarios; assess self further as a leader; enhance knowledge of the unified movement

Athletes as Coaches

Goals: Provide athletes with the skills necessary to become an assistant or head coach; understanding of the coach's role during both practice and competition and in the planning process.

Health & Wellness Ambassador

Goals: Provide athletes with the additional skills necessary to become an effective ambassador for the health and wellness movement in Special Olympics; understand more about self health and wellness; become an advocate for health and wellness programs

DIFFERbilities in Youth Leadership

Goals: Become an advocate for a cause through understanding key attributes of an advocate, speaking confidently, conducting sound research, building successful community outreach, and developing and implementing an action plan

Governance & Leadership 101

Goals: Learn how to be an effective individual on a board of directors or committee; gain significant leadership skills



Elective Courses *(subject to change)*

Athletes as Instructors

Goals: Provide athletes with the additional skills necessary to become an effective instructor for Special Olympics trainings.

PowerPoint 101

Goals: Provide athletes with the skills necessary to make PowerPoint presentations on their own in their roles of Global Messengers or Governance members.

Social Media

Goals: Provide athletes with the skills necessary to use Social Media applications for being a better athlete leader.

Athlete Input Councils

Goals: Provide athletes with the additional skills necessary to establish and conduct Athlete Input Councils at local, area, and state levels.

Videography & Photography

Goals: Provide athletes with the skills necessary to use photo, video and publishing software for sharing their story.

Self Advocacy

Goals: Provide individuals with the skills and resources to become a self-advocate in the areas of housing, healthcare, education, finances, among other topics

Youth Athletes

Goals: Young Athletes is a program that impacts children before they can compete in Special Olympics at the age of 8. In this course you'll learn how to volunteer for Young Athletes and then put your skills to use.

Athletes in Fundraising

Goals: Become the leader of the pack in fundraising for your Special Olympics team. You'll hear tips and tricks on raising money using email and social media as well as think outside the box on new fundraising tools for yourself, too!

Fundamentals of Fitness

Goals: This course is designed to give you the tools you need to become more physically fit and understand just how fitness works.



Other Educational Leadership Opportunities

Challenges Through Choice

Challenges Through Choice is a personal growth experience of self-empowerment and challenges through mental and physical activities. Participants will learn the fundamentals of teamwork and the importance of communication to creatively solve problems, learn from successes and failures, and take safe risks by challenging themselves to a level that is just beyond their personal comfort zone. Both athletes and unified partners will establish a positive working relationship with group members by building trust through honesty, fairness and dependability. They will learn to challenge themselves, create new friendships, and most importantly, build self-esteem — a key factor for being a leader. The course focuses on eight principles: respect, integrity, citizenship, responsibility, courage, care, inquiry and excellence.

Sports Academy

Our new Special Olympics Minnesota Sports Academy is a unique opportunity for coaches to attend a day of in-person Level 2 trainings, a Positive Coaches Alliance (PCA) workshop focusing on the pursuit of winning while teaching life lessons through sports, and guest speaker sessions to enhance sports knowledge and the coaching experience. This Academy is available to any new or returning coach.

MNGCDD

The goal of Partners in Policymaking is to educate participants to be active partners with those who make policy. They will become partners in policymaking. The idea is to develop partnerships that are based on positive relationships. In today's political climate of radical change, Partners graduates must work harder than ever to prevent the loss of basic rights for people with disabilities. Partners graduates can change the future by influencing public policy today. <http://partnersonlinecourses.com/>



Athlete Input Council

The State Athlete Input Council, originated in April 2017, gives input to the State Office on a variety of subjects. Members develop recommendations for Special Olympics Minnesota and respond to proposals from other parts of the organization. The council is composed of athletes in attendance at the previous year's Athletes as Ambassadors course.

Star Pin System

Special Olympics Minnesota has created an online form where athletes and/or unified partners can fill out information regarding the activity the athlete has participated in within their community. The form consists of general information about the athlete, event specific information, and a particular Global Messenger field for speeches given. Fill out this form for any leadership activities related, but not limited to, public speaking opportunities, volunteering, and coaching.

At the end of every year, activities reported online will be calculated and 'star pins' will be awarded to athletes. The color of the star pin (Gold/Silver/Bronze) will depend on the amount of activities submitted relative to activities submitted by other athletes. See *'How to Report Your ALPs Activities' flyer for more information.*

History of Athlete Leadership Programs in Minnesota

Date	Event
1996	First ALPs course offered, Beginner Global Messenger
1999	Second ALPs course offered, Governance & Leadership 101
2002	A group of staff members and key volunteers known as the 'A-Team' travel to Atlanta, GA for training in Athletes Leadership Program
2004	The Athletes as Coaches course offered
2005	Graduate Global Messenger course offered
2006	Athletes as Volunteers course is added and offered for the first time
2007	First Capitol Hill Day in Washing D.C.
2008	Minnesota created 'Challenges Through Choice' course offered for the first time
2013	Minnesota created 'Athletes as Ambassadors' course offered for the first time
2016	Star Pin reward system created to track athlete activities within their communities
2017	First-ever Athlete Input Council is assembled ALPs University offered for the first time Health & Wellness Ambassador and DIFFERbilities in Youth Leadership course is created and offered for the first time



ALPs Management Team

The following people coordinate and manage the ALPs Program in Minnesota:

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