



SOSC Coach Education System Overview

The key to improving athlete performance and well-being is the quality of sport training and experiences provided by Head Coaches, Coaches, and Team Volunteers. The SOSC Coach Education System includes minimum requirements for each level of sports volunteerism or coaching and provides a path of continuing education for those coaches who desire to gain additional knowledge and skills. The SOSC Coach Education System is based on a document distributed by Special Olympics North America (SONA) and created by Program staff from throughout SONA. The intent is to assist Special Olympics Chapters in designing and providing quality sports training for Special Olympics coaches and ultimately the athletes.

An important component of coach recruitment and retention is an effective and meaningful coach recognition program. SOSC coaches dedicate countless hours to the athletes and the organization as a whole. These volunteer coaches are central to achieving SOSC's mission. They have an immediate and direct impact on the athlete experience.

Types of SOSC Volunteer Sport Roles

Beginning in 2019, all SOSC sport volunteers will be certified in one of the following three categories. All new sport volunteers will be on-boarded as Level 1 – Team Volunteers and will only be moved into coaching roles upon completion of the certification requirements for subsequent levels. All coaches currently certified will remain in their current role, and will follow the renewal procedure listed in this document. These roles include:

- **Level 1 – Team Volunteer** – *Entry level training of Special Olympics for team manager, equipment manager, training site volunteer, chaperone. This is a non-coaching role and cannot provide instruction to athletes.*
- **Level 2 – Certified Coach (Coach)** – *Training in the core coaching components and sports-specific essentials in traditional Special Olympics and Unified Sports.*
- **Level 3 – Certified Coach (Head Coach)** – *Advanced training for coaching traditional Special Olympics and Unified Sports.*

While some sport volunteers may choose to remain a Team Volunteer, others may strive to increase their level of certification. Those who wish to advance to the next coaching level must follow the steps below:

- **Level 1 – Team Volunteer**
 - Requirements to be an entry level sport volunteer for SOSC (must be completed every three years)
 - Class A Form / Completed Background Check
 - SOSC General Orientation
 - Protective Behaviors Training
 - Concussion Course

- Coaching Special Olympics Athletes (CSOA) or SOSC’s Training Special Olympics Athletes (TSOA) certification
- **Level 2 – Certified Coach; Certified Unified Sports Coach; or Certified Team Wellness Coach**
 - Requirements for Traditional/Community Programs
 - All Level 1 requirements
 - Sports Specific Skills certification:
 - in-person training conducted by a certified clinician for first time coaches.
 - Coaches who are re-certifying can take SOSC’s online course or continuing education opportunities identified and approved by SOSC.
 - Requirements for Community Programs with Unified Sports Teams Programs
 - All Level 1 requirements
 - Sports Specific Skills certification:
 - in-person training conducted by a certified clinician for first time coaches.
 - Coaches who are re-certifying can take SOSC’s online course or continuing education opportunities identified and approved by SOSC.
 - Coaching Unified Sports certification:
 - In-person training conducted by a certified clinician for first time coaches.
 - Completion of the [online Coaching Unified Sports course](#) via National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)
 - Coaches who are renewing may complete the online course.
 - Requirements for Team Wellness Programs
 - All Level 1 requirements
 - Sports Specific Skills certification:
 - in-person training conducted by a certified clinician for first time coaches.
 - Coaches who are re-certifying can take SOSC’s online course or continuing education opportunities identified and approved by SOSC.
 - **Important Notes**
 - CSOA/TSOA or Coaching Unified Sports must be taken prior to placement with a team, while the Sport Specific Skills certification course must be taken prior to the first full season of coaching, if none are available. *i.e. If a coach begins in the middle of the 2020 Spring Season and the Sport Specific Skills trainings have already taken place, he/she will have until the start of the 2021 Spring Season to complete the Sport Specific Skills certification course.*
 - CSOA/TSOA and/or Coaching Unified Sports certification is required before being eligible to take the Sports Specific Skills certification course.
 - SOSC has identified continuing education opportunities for Level 2 and 3 Certified Coaches so that required recertification can be achieved every three (3) years. There is a menu of options available to all Coaches to choose from to achieve recertification. See the attached list of SOSC approved courses.
 - This level of certification is required of all Head Coaches and Coaches applying to coach at [USA Games](#).
- **Level 3 – Certified Coach; Certified Unified Sports Coach; or Certified Team Wellness Coach**
 - Requirements to be a Head Coach for SOSC
 - All Level 2 requirements
 - [Principles of Coaching](#) course: in-person training conducted by a certified clinician or online The Principles of Coaching certification is a one-time certification and does not expire.
 - **Important Notes**
 - This level of certification is required of all Head Coaches and Coaches applying to coach at [World Games](#).

Continuing Education

In order to maintain certification, a Level 2 Certified Coach and Level 3 Certified Head Coach must update his/her certifications every 3 years. Below is the current list of courses approved for recertification. This list will be updated periodically and will be available online at www.sosc.org/coachescorner:

- First-Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Course
- Sport-Specific Performance Training and Nutrition
- Athlete Behavior Characteristics and Strategies to Improve Learning
- National Governing Body courses
- [A Coach's Playbook: Introduction to Autism and Instructional Strategies for Coaching](#)
- [NFHS - Fundamentals of Coaching](#)
- [Positive Coaching Alliance: Double Goal Coach: Culture, Practice and Games](#)
- [Positive Coaching Alliance: Double Goal Coach: Coaching for Winning and Life Lessons](#)
- [NFHS - Sports Nutrition](#)
- [LA84 Coaches Workshops](#)

Coaches may identify other Special Olympics or third party courses that may be deemed appropriate for recertification. These courses must be pre-approved by the Coaches Education team prior to completion.