



Q: Is Athletes as Coaches a sport specific training?

A: No, Athletes as Coaches is a course at Athlete Leadership University teaching athletes how to transition from a competitor to a coach. If Athletes as Coaches participants wish to be certified, they must attend a SOPA Training School like all other coaches and complete a practicum within a year of the training.

Q: Does an athlete need to take Athletes as Coaches before attending a SOPA training school?

A: No, if an athlete is ready to become a certified coach, they are not required to attend Athletes as Coaches. However, they are highly encouraged to take this course to gain a general understanding of coaching in Special Olympics, as well as pursue an Athlete Leadership University degree. An athlete that is already a certified coach may also take Athletes as Coaches if they are struggling with their transition from competitor to coach.

Q: What is the difference between coaching vs. competing?

A: Athletes serving as coaches may not coach and compete in the same sport in the same season.

A: Athletes serving as coaches may not compete in other sports taking place in the same season as the one they're coaching.

A: If Athlete as Coach may return as a competitor for that sport/season the following year.

A: Athletes serving as coaches may compete in sports outside of the season they are coaching.

Q: Are Athletes as Coaches permitted to chaperone other athletes?

A: No, Athletes as Coaches cannot assume a chaperone role.

Q: Are Athletes as Coaches apart of the 4:1 ratio?

A: No, they are part of the 4:2 ratio. Special Olympics requires one coach to serve as a chaperone for every four athletes. Since Athletes as Coaches cannot chaperone other athletes, and so local programs do not have to bring additional volunteers, Athletes as Coaches are included in the 4:2 ratio to ensure the 4:1 ratio is still being met.

Q: How does the SOPA Housing Policy affect Athletes as Coaches?

A: Any Athlete as Coach individual will be treated as a coach and must:

- Have all required Class A background checks.
- Be housed with other athletes according to SOPA's Housing Policy BUT not within their coaching sport. This will keep any conflicts of authority out of play. If HOD does not believe this is appropriate, they will explore alternative (exception) solution (see below).

When housing with another sports athlete is not an option (i.e., only one sport attending) they will be permitted to be housed with another Class A (non-ID) volunteer coach with written consent provided by the adult athlete and witnessed by a local program leader or their family.

Q: How much will it cost local programs to send Athletes as Coaches to state competitions?

A: Athletes as Coaches coming to any state events as members of a delegation and providing a coaching role, will not be charged neither as an athlete nor as an “additional delegate”.

Q: Are Athletes as Coaches allowed to take Athlete Input Surveys at sectional and state competitions?

A: No, these surveys may only be taken by competing athletes. Athletes as Coaches may assist if needed, but may not take a survey themselves.

Q: Are Athletes as Coaches allowed to attend Athlete Input Councils at state competitions?

A: Yes, under the condition that they are there to support their competing athletes. Athletes as Coaches may not provide their own input. If Athletes as Coaches do share their own input, the facilitators reserve the right to ask competing athletes if they agree with their statement.

Q: Are Athletes as Coaches allowed to serve in other Athlete Leadership capacities (Athlete Representative, Global Messenger, Health and Fitness Coordinator, etc.)?

A: Yes, under the condition that they compete in at least one sport outside of the season they’re coaching.

A: If Athlete as Coach no longer competes in any sports, Local Programs are to:

- Have multiple trained and active Athlete Leaders in each leadership capacity to ensure a smooth transition.
- If Local Program does not have multiple trained and active Athlete Leaders in each leadership capacity, they are to identify one or more new Athlete Leaders to be trained and succeed Athlete as Coach within a year.

Athletes as Coaches no longer competing are still welcomed to pursue another position on the Management Team if they are interested and their Local Program believes they are appropriate.

Q: Are Athletes as Coaches allowed to serve on an Athlete Leadership Team (ALT)?

A: Yes, under the condition that they compete in at least one sport outside of the season they’re coaching. If Athlete as Coach is no longer competing, then they are to transition off the ALT within a year. All ALTs are asked to develop their own succession plan to ensure all interested athletes within the Local Program have a chance to serve.

If you have any questions that are not on this list, please contact Athlete Leadership Coordinator, Jordan Schubert at 610-630-9450 ext. 236 or jschubert@specialolympicspa.org.